To Rev. Dr. Lamb,
with kind regards
of his old Fellow-
student
The Author

THE PERFECTION

OF

THE ATONEMENT.

(1869)

Presentation
by the Author

THE PERFECTION

OF

THE ATONEMENT,

VIEWED

Popularly, Logically, and Scripturally.

BY

THOMAS WILSON,

MINISTER, CANADA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CALEDONIA.

"We also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."—Rom v. 11. See also Isa. i. 18; 1 John i. 7, last clause; John iii. 16.

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Recommendatory Note

BY

REVS. WM. ORMISTON, D.D., AND DAVID INGLIS,
HAMILTON, ONTARIO.

IN issuing this small volume to the public, with the fervent prayer that, by God's blessing, it may be instrumental in awakening the careless, reclaiming the sceptical, and building up believers in hope and comfort, unto final salvation through Jesus—the Author begs to call attention to the following Testimonial in its favour, written by two of his co-Presbyters, whose names are not only well-known throughout the Church in Canada, but have travelled beyond it:—

"We have carefully perused the manuscript of a small volume, entitled "THE PERFECTION OF THE ATONEMENT," written by the Rev. Mr. Wilson

of Caledonia; and have formed a very favourable opinion of the merits of the work. The doctrines maintained are Scriptural and orthodox—the method of treatment simple and popular—and the style clear and forcible. The supreme importance and universal interest of the subject are vigorously enforced and vividly illustrated. It is decidedly a readable book on the most profound and most momentous of all questions; and we heartily recommend it to the attention of all, and specially to such as may neither have the leisure nor the inclination to read more extensive treatises."

W. ORMISTON, D.D.
DAVID INGLIS.

HAMILTON, *March* 22, 1869.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

I. THE CASE STATED 9
Importance—Atonement defined—Law—Guilt—Condemnation.

II. IMPERFECTION OF HUMAN REMEDIES . 20
Unauthoritative—Uncertain—Annihilation—Mere Repentance—Penance—Inferior Sacrifices.

III. THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE 38
God's Remedy—Perfect substitution—Perfectly efficacious—Perfectly free.

IV. ERRORS, DIFFICULTIES, AND OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED 95
Necessity of Difficulties—Difficulties no excuse—Cruelty—Admissibility of Substitution—Sufficiency of the one Substitute for many Sinners—Adequacy of His Temporal Sufferings to save from Everlasting Evil—Moral Influence and Success.

V. RELATION OF THE ATONEMENT TO MAN 129
Believers and Unbelievers—In Christendom—In Heathendom—In Eternity.

VI. THE GRACIOUS INVITATION 148
The Inviter—The Burden—The Need—The Coming.

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CHAPTER I.

THE CASE STATED.

"Christ suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."—1 PETER iii. 18.

THE importance of this subject, to every person of sane mind, cannot be surpassed. It is the central truth of the Gospel—the essence of God's good news to our dying race—the never failing fountain whence flows every other blessing necessary to our final salvation. Its acceptance by the believer is "the savour of life unto life;" and its rejection by the unbeliever "the savour of death unto death." In order, then, that this subject, in all its vast importance, may be understood, felt, and acted upon by us, to our comfort here and welfare in

the great Hereafter, let us in this chapter notice briefly what it is, together with a few preliminary facts which it involves.

What, then, is this subject? The word "atonement" means something done, in order that two parties at variance may be brought together again in friendship and peace. It expresses something which satisfies the wounded dignity and standing of the offended party, and allows him, on just and honourable terms, to receive the offender back into his favour—a something which, at the same time, assures the offender that, on seeking reconciliation, he will be pardoned and accepted. Here, of course, we use the word to denote the great vicarious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, in virtue of which God and man, naturally separated by the sin of the latter, may be brought again into harmony and fellowship with each other. That sacrifice satisfied the infinite majesty of God's character and position, as moral governor of the universe, and, therefore, it permits Him, in consistency with the infinite holiness of His nature, and with a due regard to all

the interests of His government, to be merciful and gracious to sinners; while, at the same time, in regard to the sinner, it gives him assurance that, if he come unto God through faith in this atonement for his sins, he will in nowise be cast out. And, with respect to the word "perfection" here, we use it to signify that the sacrifice of Christ was and is all-sufficient, in every way, to accomplish the highly important objects it contemplated.

Such is the subject, and, as we have said, it presupposes some other great facts. It involves, first, the fact, that man is naturally under the law of God, and bound to keep it perfectly, as the condition of his continuing to enjoy God's favour. This fact may be established by a triple line of proof. There is the evidence of our own *reason*. Its testimony is, that, as God is our absolute Creator and Preserver, and has absolute power over our life and death, we are His absolute property and dependants; and are, therefore, most firmly bound, if we would not offend Him, to obey His will in all things, omitting nothing and doing every-

thing He enjoins upon us. There is also the evidence of our own *conscience.* In every man, civilized or savage, conscience utters essentially the same language—saying to every one, thou shalt think, speak, or do no evil, but only what is true and right. And not only, as the law-giver enthroned in every heart, does conscience thus speak: it also speaks to us, with all the authority of a supreme judge over us—condemning us as deserving of punishment, when we think or do any wrong; and praising us as worthy of reward when we think or do any good. Moreover, it is impartial in its decisions, placing rich and poor on the same level, and utterly refusing to be bribed. Now, as it was God that put this conscience within us, what is it but the voice of his own impartial, unbribable law declaring most authoritatively to us, that if we would not be condemned by Him, we must render a perfect obedience in all things to Him? Though reason is now dimmed and conscience seared by the Fall, yet it is impossible to conceive either of them affirming that we should disobey God in anything, or that God will be

pleased even with our least disobedient act. And there is the evidence—the infallible evidence—of *God's own word.* It tells us, that if Adam, the representative head of the whole human race, would disobey God even in one small matter, he would become liable to the penalty—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Then our Lord also tells us, that even if we hate our brother in our heart, we are guilty of murder. Indeed, the whole tenor of God's word from beginning to end declares in the plainest terms, that we must observe "all the words of His law," and that too "with all our heart, and strength, and mind," if we would not lose His favour, and incur the penalty due to transgressors.

It also involves the fact, that man is guilty of breaking God's law. His guilt is both federal and personal, or, as others render it, original and actual. And what is federal guilt? It is, as the Westminster Catechism says, "our sinning in Adam, and falling with him, in his first transgression." This federal guilt, of course, does not mean, that we personally ate of the

forbidden fruit, whatever it was; or that we personally feel remorse for his sin. Nevertheless, it means that, as he was our representative in the first covenant, or covenant of works, we representatively sinned in him, and became exposed to the consequences of his crime. Such a reality as this representative guilt we see in daily life. A father, for instance, is the representative of his family. If he, by any wrong act, loses all his property, the children also suffer by his wrong doing, in that by his act and loss, they are subjected to poverty. Or, again, if parents lead an immoral life, and contract some radical disease, the children, being in them, become heirs of that disease. In like manner, by the sin of our great parent and representative, all are now born—not perfect as Adam was, when he did and must have come forth a perfect piece of workmanship from the hands of the infinitely perfect Creator—but heirs of his fallen estate and nature. Hence, it is written in Scripture, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Then, in regard to our personal guilt, there can be no doubt of it in

any well informed mind. The verdict of our own conscience is, that, in thought, word, and deed, times without number, by either omitting a felt duty, or violating a felt obligation, we are indeed sinners. Our reason also tells us that, when we compare our thoughts and actions with the law of God, as laid down in the Ten Commandments, there is not one of them but we have repeatedly broken in the spirit, if not also in the letter. And God's word emphatically declares that "there is none righteous, no, not one;" and that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

And it likewise involves the fact, that man, by reason of his guilt, is exposed to punishment, even everlasting punishment. This also may be proved in much the same manner as the preceding facts. Conscience holds out no hope to the guilty. It tells us that, having by our disobedience rebelled against God's authority, we deserve the penalty of death — that, having offended God, and this too without any provocation, and in spite of daily countless benefits, we deserve to lose His favour entirely; and the entire loss of

His favour would be death, as it would be the stopping of all our mercies—that, having forsaken God, we deserve to be forsaken by Him; and, of course, to be forsaken by God, and left to our own helplessness, would be certain, irremediable ruin. Nay more, guilt in the conscience, producing fears and remorse, remains there, as a disease, incurable at least by man—a fear and remorse that, though now slumbering or stifled for a while, occasionally burst forth, as a terrible pledge and foretaste of that "worm" in eternity "that dieth not." Reason also in itself holds out little or no hope to the guilty. It tells us that those who violate law should suffer its curse—that, as God is infinitely holy, He must hate sin—that, as He is infinitely just, He must vindicate His justice in punishing the transgressor—and that, as He is infinitely true, He must inflict the penalty He has attached to the violation of His law. Observation, even in common life, likewise shows that the transgressor, according to his crime, suffers proportionately, and yet permanently. Daily, in common society, we see that, by the operation

of some invisible powerful law, persons of low character are doomed to associate with each other, almost already separate from the good—that the least criminal, although ostensibly punished for only a short time, retains a permanent stigma on his character, which injures him all throughout life—that those, who repeatedly violate law, are either imprisoned or banished for life, as dangerous pests to society—and that those, who commit a capital offence, suffer the extreme sentence of the law. All this, every human government, in order to vindicate its majesty, and protect the interests of society, is compelled to inflict on evil-doers; and therefore it hints to us that God, as moral ruler of the universe, in order to vindicate the majesty of His authority and law, and protect the interests of His intelligent creatures, must also deal in much the same way with transgressors, though in an infinitely higher manner, according to his own infinitely higher nature and position. Moreover, the various religions of the heathen, corrupt as these are, show that the sinner is liable to everlasting punishment. The Druidism

of ancient Gaul and Briton—the worship of old Greece and Rome—the pagodas of China and Hindostan—the creed of Mahometanism—the fetichism of the African negroes—the rites of our North American Indians—all show that, either by some universal instinct implanted by God in human nature, or by the voice of universal tradition directly derived, though now much distorted, from some original divine communication, the sinner is exposed to everlasting wrath and endless misery. And God's own word gives no uncertain sound about the sinner being naturally liable to suffer here, and especially hereafter. It distinctly states, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Now, this sentence holds out no hope of the sinner's recovery, after a certain amount of punishment; for it leaves the sinner's soul under the power of death. Nor is this death the mere separation of soul and body; for it is the soul that is said to die. Nor is this death annihilation; for it is in the divine volume described by such expressions as these—"The wrath to come,"—"punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and

the glory of His power"—"where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched"—"these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

Thus, our present natural condition, as guilty of breaking God's law, and exposed to misery here and especially hereafter, shows that a perfect atonement with God, in order to our pardon and deliverance, is a matter unspeakably momentous.

CHAPTER II.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF HUMAN REMEDIES.

"When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."—ROM. v. 6.

"Neither is there salvation in any other."—ACTS iv. 12.

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."—JER. x. 23.

THE importance of the atonement, which the Son of God has made for our sins, appears also from the fact, that all remedies, devised by the sinner himself, are imperfect, and altogether insufficient to secure his peace with God, and obtain the remission of his sins.

It is almost self-evident, that any remedy, proposed by the sinner himself, must be defective and unavailing. His ignorance, especially

if left to himself, unfits him to be the judge in the case. What the infinitely perfect nature of God demands against iniquity—what the interests of His government require, when they are outraged by the transgression of His law—and what the exceeding demerit of sin itself is—are things too high for the sinner's unaided comprehension; and therefore his ignorance, if left to himself, disqualifies him for either devising or judging what can be a proper and perfect remedy in the matter. The infinitely holy nature of the party offended, the turpitude of the offence in rebelling against so great and good a Being, as well as all the vast complicated interests of His government over all intelligent creatures, clearly show that infinite wisdom is required, in order to judge and devise what remedy will perfectly meet all the exigencies of the case. Moreover, the sinner is disqualified by his own interested prejudices from being a proper judge in the matter. Who would, even in a human court of law, ever dream of making the criminal the judge in his own trial? Every one knows that by his selfish prejudices he

would so belittle his crime, and so reduce the penalty to almost nothing, that, if criminals were left to be their own judges, all justice would be so perverted, and wickedness so encouraged, that society could not possibly exist. Now, if this be so in human government, who will dare to say that, in God's government over us, the sinner, so full of interested prejudices for self, is qualified to be the judge either of the magnitude of his own offence, or of the penalty that is required? Besides, the sinner has no right—no authority whatever—to make his own will and pleasure the standard of what is a sufficient atonement for his sins. Such a thing is not allowed in human governments, never dreamt of. Nor, assuredly, can it be allowed in God's government. The sinner is the offender: and it is not his pleasure, but the pleasure of the judge and offended party that must be taken into account and satisfied ere reconciliation can be possible. Now, in regard to sin, God is both the judge and the offended party. He, therefore, and not the sinner, has the right to determine what remedy is sufficient, in

order to secure the sinner's deliverance from the curse of the law. No remedy, however pleasing to the sinner, if it does not satisfy God, can be of any use; and, from the sinner's ignorance, prejudice, and want of authority, it is almost self-evident that all human remedies—that every remedy but what God Himself provides and approves of—must be defective, unauthoritative, and unavailing.

The remedies which men have devised, in order to obtain forgiveness of sin and acceptance with God, are numerous and diversified. Nothing else could reasonably be expected. As all the authors of these remedies were themselves ignorant, and sinful, and without authority, the one would not submit to the other, but each thought his own remedy as good as his neighbour's, and even much better.

These remedies may all, in our opinions, be reduced to four—annihilation, repentance, penance, and inferior sacrifices.

The first remedy is that of the lowest class of infidels. These regard God as feeling no interest in our race—as careless whether we are

obedient and happy, or wicked and miserable—and as death being our utter destruction. No one is more ready than these infidels to admit, that the world is exceedingly wicked and miserable, but they hold out no hope but the grim, reckless hope of utter annihilation at death for us. There are most serious and fatal objections to this remedy. Its advocates cannot prove it—are not sure of it. They, especially by their own fears when death draws nigh, often show that they have themselves very great doubts about it. Certain it is, that if it be God's will, he can as easily continue our existence through all eternity as he could first call us into being. Now, if death is not the end of our existence, and if there is a remedy provided by the mercy of God for our sins, but if misled by this infidel theory as our first parents were misled by the tempter, we have neglected and rejected God's mercy; then this infidel theory, instead of being even a gloomy relief, has only made our eternal ruin all the more terrible; besides, it is opposed to reason. As God makes no useless thing, so the very capability which man's

soul has to conceive the ideas of God, responsibility, and eternity proves that man's soul is responsible to God and immortal. If death were the extinction of our being, and we were not responsible and immortal creatures, then it would have been impossible for us even to think of God, or of accountability to Him, or of eternity, for it would be useless. The beasts that perish, for instance, have no idea of God, or of responsibility to Him, or of eternity. They are utterly unable even to form such an idea, just because they are beasts that perish. But man can easily form an idea of these weighty matters, because he is not a beast that perishes, but a spiritual, responsible, immortal being. Moreover, it is contradicted by almost universal tradition among all the various races of men. They almost universally believe in a future state; and their belief cannot be properly accounted for in any other way than by supposing that either God has made such a belief a natural instinct in man's soul, or that it has been handed down from generation to generation from God's having directly revealed it to our first parents.

And then, this poor remedy is flatly condemned by God's Word. It most solemnly and emphatically tells us that "it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment." "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that we may receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be bad."

The second remedy is that of those who hold that mere repentance is all that God requires, in order to his forgiving the sinner and receiving him again into full favour. In support of this, its advocates plausibly say, that man often forgives those who offend him upon simple repentance, and that God is surely not less merciful than man. There is a grain of scriptural truth in this remedy. It it true that without repentance no sinner can be saved. But while this theory leaves us only to infer that God is merciful, the doctrine of Christ's propitiation for our sins proves it. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Moreover, this positive display of God's love, as

well as the gift of the Spirit that comes to us through the Atonement, is necessary to work true repentance in us. It is then that we truly say "we love God, because He first loved us." But while true repentance on our part is necessary, yet by itself it is not sufficient to be the ground of either the sinner's pardon or acceptance. Simple repentance pays no debt. It sets the claims of justice altogether aside. It professes to exalt mercy, but only by ignoring justice entirely. There is good reason why, in many cases, one man should fully pardon another that offends him upon simple repentance. We are sinners ourselves, we have nothing to pay, we need free pardon, and as we expect God to pardon us freely, so our prayer should be, "Forgive us our trespasses, even as we freely forgive them that trespass against us." But God is no sinner, needing mercy Himself; and hence the two cases are not parallel, and should not be argued as if they were parallel. By His very nature as an infinitely perfect Being, God cannot ignore or sacrifice any attribute of His nature at the expense of another. As the infinitely perfect

God, it is impossible for Him to violate His justice by giving way only to mercy. He is infinitely just as well as infinitely merciful; and, therefore, His infinite justice against the transgressors of His law must be satisfied ere his infinite mercy can rest upon the sinner that repents. Moreover, it would be very dangerous for any human being, society, or government, to overlook the claims of justice in every case, and fully pardon the offender or criminal upon mere repentance. Why, if all debts, offences, and crimes were forgiven upon simple repentance, it would soon make these evils be regarded as mere trifles, and would encourage men to indulge in them to the very destruction of all society and government. So if God were freely to pardon the sinner upon simple repentance, sin would soon be regarded as a mere trifle and sinners encouraged to give themselves up to it, until as in the antediluvian world, there would be only intolerable violence, wickedness, and ungodliness everywhere. Besides, as God is infinitely holy as well as just, he cannot regard even the smallest sin as a trifle, or give even

the least encouragement to it. It is as radically opposed to his holiness as light to darkness; and therefore he must show His infinite hatred of it, even while He pardons it. Of course, were He to pardon sin upon simple repentance, His infinitely holy hatred of it would be ignored. Now, as it is impossible for Him to lie, because it would be a denying of His truthfulness, so it is impossible for Him to pardon sin upon mere repentance, because it would be a denying of that holiness which is the very essence of His being. Further, simple repentance by itself is no guarantee that the sinner will not sin and rebel again. Hence, if that were the only thing necessary for salvation the sinner would, even in heaven, be sinning and falling as Adam did in Paradise, and as some of the angels fell from heaven. Mere repentance, then, by itself would in reality be scarcely any salvation at all. Still further, this remedy assumes that the sinner, by his own unaided power and will, can repent at his own mere pleasure. But this is flatly contradicted by universal history. All history shows that the sinner when left to him-

self, instead of turning unto God, only wanders farther from Him. Nay, even the advocates of this remedy of simple repentance are often forced to confess that, while through the attractive power of Christ's vicarious sacrifice for their sins, thousands upon thousands are led to God in true repentance, yet their own proposed remedy scarcely ever leads one to repent at all. And, lastly, it is almost needless to state that this theory of simple repentance in order to pardon and final salvation, has no countenance in God's Word; for there we are plainly told that, "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin." In all its various forms this remedy, like the preceding one, is a human device, and has no proper authority to assure the sinner that upon his own simple repentance, he will be pardoned, accepted, and saved.

The third remedy of man's devising is penance. This also contains a small grain of scriptural truth; for it admits that sin must be punished ere there can be pardon. It assumes, however, that if a sinner undergoes a certain limited amount of suffering, he is entitled to

Divine pardon, and even becomes qualified in holiness to enjoy the society of the blessed in heaven. Hence the many devotees in pagan lands, and even in Christian countries, that so punish and torture themselves. Hence the superstitious feeling that still exists in many vulgar minds, that they must be saved in the world to come, because they have been afflicted in this. Hence the assertion of others that, after a certain fixed amount of suffering in hell, the sinner will be regarded as having satisfied Divine justice and become purified from sin, and that, therefore, when his penance is accomplished, he will be received into heaven. This remedy, however, is one of the sinner's own devising, and therefore is devoid of all authority to warrant our reliance upon it. It is, besides, impossible for any one to prove that any limited amount of suffering that the sinner endures for sin will satisfy the claims of God's infinitely holy character, law, and government. Certain it is that, in many cases of guilt here, human government is satisfied with nothing but the death, or perpetual banishment, or imprisonment

for life of the transgressor; and no one can with any certainty deny that, in all cases, Divine law may require much the same dealing with the sinner, if the sinner be left to his own unworthiness and helplessness. Moreover, if a man were even once to despise God's authority, he cannot by his own reason alone be sure that God will ever receive him into favour again. Certainly, if a man even once offends God and forsakes him, God is not, by anything the offender does or suffers, bound to pardon and bless him with mercies. And, in regard to those who have despised and offended him hundreds of times, if not all their lives, who will dare to say that God must, some time hereafter, pardon and reward them? Then it is not true that suffering in itself necessarily purifies the sinner, and fits him ever afterwards for a pure, obedient life, or for heaven. The thief, for instance, is often punished; but, instead of being purified by the suffering, he generally becomes more criminal. The drunkard, by *delirium tremens*, sometimes suffers the very tortures of hell upon earth; and yet, instead of being necessarily weaned from

his vice by that suffering, the probability is that he will return more greedily to it. The careless, hardened sinner, when he is in pain and imagines that he is dying, often professes the deepest repentance; but if he recovers he, in nine cases out of ten, remains a hardened, careless sinner still. Hence there is no reason to suppose that any amount of suffering in eternity will purify the sinner, and fit him for the society of heaven. And God's Word gives no countenance to the notion that the sinner can ever be justified or purified by his own sufferings. Here his suffering, if sanctified by Divine grace, may change his mind to the better, and so lead to his purification. This much does God's Word affirm, and no more. But in the Hereafter it holds out no change either in the sinner's nature or condition. Its solemn decision is, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

And the fourth human remedy is that of inferior sacrifice. There is more scriptural truth

in this; for it admits the three scriptural principles, that "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins;" that a substitute may take the sinner's place, and bear his penalty, and allow him to be set free; and that this substitutionary sacrifice must be the best of its kind. There now is, and ever has been from time immemorial, a conviction prevalent among the heathen, that sin is so heinous an offence that it must be expiated by blood ere the Divine favour can be regained by the sinner. Hence it ever was, and still is, customary among them to sacrifice some animal, as a lamb, bullock, or dog —the best of its kind, and offer up its blood to their supposed deity as a propitiation for their sins. In extreme cases, as among the Druids and Greeks, for instance, the blood of even a child, or of a youth, especially of a virgin, as being more pure and innocent, was offered up as a more excellent and satisfactory expiation for iniquity. And in Scripture we find that, from the days of Abel even up to the time of Christ's coming, as the great and all-sufficient propitiation, the sacrifice—happily not of human

beings, but of the most perfect of lambs and of oxen—was even commanded by God as a necessary atonement for sin ere he pardoned the transgressor. It is almost self-evident, however, that such inferior victims in themselves could never be a sufficient propitiatory offering. In regard to the sacrifices of dogs, lambs, or oxen, it is evident that the blood of such inferior creatures, destitute of any spiritual nature, could never in itself be an adequate atonement for the sin of intelligent, moral, responsible man. Moreover, all animals are the property of God, and we hold them only as his stewards; and how could we propitiate Him by offering Him only His own property as our ransom. In regard to such victims as children or the youth of either sex, neither could the sacrifice of these be a sufficient atonement for iniquity; for, however pure in our eyes, they are in the sight of the God of holiness naturally sinful and polluted; and their own lives are already forfeited to the curse; and they already are the property of God, as their Creator and Preserver; and it was mere cruelty to sacrifice, especially against

their own will, such supposed innocent beings, in order that guilty transgressors might escape; and God's Word distinctly tells us that "no man can redeem his brother, or give unto God a ransom for his soul." And in regard to the inferior sacrifices mentioned in Scripture as enjoined by God, and offered up by His ancient people as an atonement for sin, these were commanded and offered up, not as in themselves a sufficient sacrifice, but only as types of the complete, perfect atonement that, in the fulness of time, by the sacrifice of Himself as the sinner's substitute, the Son of God was to make once and for all. Moreover, all these inferior sacrifices are condemned in God's Word as being in themselves in nowise a sufficient atonement for sin. It positively tells us that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins," and "never could make the comers thereunto perfect."

Thus, then, we see, both from reason, history, and Scripture, that the sinner, by ignorance, prejudice, and want of authority, is utterly unfit to devise a sufficient remedy to find peace with

God, and save himself from the awful, everlasting consequences of sin; that all schemes of mere human device are so uncertain and insufficient, that no man knows which to choose from with any authority; and that, having no authority, his reliance upon any one of them is only a blind trusting to a broken reed in the most momentous of all concerns; and that the sinner, if he is to have a thorough trust and hope that can never fail him, must in faith accept of that perfect atonement for sin that God, in the riches of His mercy, reveals to us in His Word.

CHAPTER III.

THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE.

"The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."—1 JOHN i. 7.

WHAT an exquisite pleasure it is in being relieved from vague uncertainty and painful suspense, by finding something solid and true, in which we can thoroughly trust and hope. To the traveller, who feels that he has lost his way in the midnight darkness, or by the misleading of ignorant guides, what a relief is the morning dawn, or the finding of a safe and reliable conductor. To the criminal, condemned to die, yet anxious to preserve life and regain freedom, what a relief is the announcement, that there is a way open, by which he

may obtain free and full pardon from the sovereign. So to the man who feels himself a sinner, and exposed to the fearful consequences of sin, what a relief to turn away from all the false, unsatisfactory remedies of mere men, and rest upon the divine, infallible remedy—"the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

More than once, the writer has spoken to certain persons about the necessity of having something satisfactory to rest upon, so that, when death and judgment came upon them, they might be ready for their greatest event—"prepare to meet thy God." But, as the evil appeared to be far distant, they seemingly remained entirely careless about it. Afterwards, when the same persons became afflicted, and felt that their days were numbered, gradually their one all-absorbing question was, is there mercy for such as we; and, if so, what shall we do, in order to obtain God's pardon and peace? No mere human device would then satisfy them. Weak, ignorant, sinful, dying, and helpless themselves, with their all at stake, they felt that no

remedy devised by mere creatures like themselves could give them either peace of mind or secure them for eternity. They felt that, in their extremity, vain—utterly vain—was the help of man, and that, if they could be helped at all, both their light and safety must come from the Lord. Hence, not man's but God's word was what they hungered and thirsted for. And as they grew in acquaintance with His blessed gospel — especially as they realized the all-sufficiency of the atonement that God in Christ had provided for their sins,—they felt, as the celebrated Sir David Brewster said about himself, that it met all the necessities of their case; and that, resting upon it in faith, they had peace and a good hope through grace. So, reader, as death and eternity are every day drawing nigher also to your door, the time will come when you will find that, if God be not your help, vain will be all the help of man.

The value of Christ's sacrifice, as the sinner's substitute, then, appears from the fact, that it is not only a remedy for man's guilt, and the only remedy, but that it is a perfect one. "It

cleanseth us," says the apostle, "from *all* sin." There are four things that prove its all-sufficiency. It is the divine remedy—perfect substitution for the sinner—perfectly efficacious in its results—and perfectly free to "whosoever believeth." Observe, then,

I. *The Atonement of Christ is perfect, because it is God's remedy for man's guilt.*

There was a probability, we think, even apart from divine revelation, that when man sinned and fell, God would provide a remedy for him. Of course, God was in nowise bound to provide any help for one, that had so disbelieved his word, and rebelled against his authority. Still there were, in the circumstances, two things that, in our opinion, rendered it probable he would do so. The first is, that, had God not interfered, but left man only to suffer the sentence—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die"—the human race would have entirely and for ever perished, not even one excepted. Thus, one part of God's creation—unspeakably the very highest upon earth—beings made in his own moral image to render him intelligent praise,

and show forth his glory in a spiritual manner—would have been for ever lost to him. Now, was it likely that God would suffer his noblest workmanship on earth—the source of his richest praise here—to be thus altogether and irremediably destroyed? We think not. True, in the case of the angels that kept not their first estate, as Jude mentions in his Epistle, there was and is no remedy provided. But, then, the angels did not all fall. And if the justice and holiness of God against sin are vindicated, in leaving the rebellious angels to their fate; yet there remain the holy angels still, as glorious monuments of his creative wisdom, to yield him the praise that is due unto his name. But, in the case of our first parents' sin and fall, the whole of our race would have been for ever lost if left to the consequences of their sin. There would not have been even one left, either to glorify God willingly, or to enjoy him. Hence, in order that all might not perish in sin, but a seed be preserved to serve, praise, and enjoy him, there was, we think, an antecedent probability that God would provide a remedy for man's sin and ruin.

The second reason for the probability of God's providing this remedy consists in the fact, that it gave him an opportunity for manifesting that mercy, which is, if we may so speak, the most glorious attribute of his nature. The chief motive that can be conceived for God's doing anything whatever is, that he may thus display the attributes of his being. But where would the mercy of God have been exhibited, if it had not been exerted in providing a remedy for sinful, fallen, perishing man? Nowhere. In creation and providence there is manifested the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, but not his mercy. In punishing the rebellious angels there is displayed his infinite justice and holiness against sin, but not his mercy. In preserving the holy angels, there is exhibited his infinite kindness, but not his mercy; for mercy is favour shown to the guilty, and they are not guilty. The only other intelligent creatures, then, that we know anything of, or can speak about, is our own race. Now, as God manifests his attributes in all he does, and delights doubtless in the manifestation of them all, and as our guilty,

fallen race, so far as we know, are the only creatures that give him opportunity for exhibiting the infinite mercy of his nature; so there was, we think, even before he proclaimed it, a probability that he would take pity upon us, and provide a remedy for our natural guilt and misery.

There is also a probable certainty, apart from the revelations of his own word, that God did desire and make known such a merciful remedy. The very worship of all the heathen nations, scattered throughout the world, shows that the worshippers believe, at least, that sinners may obtain divine pardon and favour. Why, for instance, does yonder heathen plunge the knife in his victim, and offer up its blood upon the altar of his deity? Because he believes that his deity--the Supreme Deity as he imagines —is not only propitiable, but will, through such a means, forgive his transgressions and bless him in eternity. So throughout all the world, among millions upon millions from time immemorial, among ancient Greeks and Assyrians as well as among modern Hindoos and North

American Indians, the belief has been ever common, that by some offering or other the Divine Being may be reconciled to the transgressor. Now, whence did all these nations obtain their belief that God was thus propitiable? Did it spring from their own hearts? Then, who put that idea into their hearts but God? It is almost impossible, if not utterly impossible that such an idea could have been so universal and powerful, unless God himself directly or indirectly, imprinted it upon their hearts; or did it spring from some tradition handed down from the earliest to every succeeding generation? Then, what was that tradition at first, and who gave it? It must have been originally a communication from God—not unlikely the very first promise after the Fall, or the same promise enlarged by further communication, transmitted through Noah's faith and worship to his posterity, for no other could give it. Of course, like every other communication not preserved in writing or printing, the original communication from God, by some men forgetting part of it, and others adding to it, soon

became gradually distorted into a tradition either more or less false, but having a basis of truth in it: for the counterfeit proves the true. There could be no counterfeit money, if there were, first, no good money. There could be no falsehoods, if there were no truths and realities. So the very existence of these heathen traditions, affirming that the sinner by some propitiation or other may obtain mercy from the Supreme Being, proves almost to a positive certainty that in the beginning when man sinned and fell, even then God revealed to him a way by means of which he might find pardon and eternal peace.

But in regard to this most momentous of all our interests, we are, through the tender mercy of God, happily neither left to merely probable nor probably certain conjecture. We have God's own word, authoritatively and plainly announcing to us the positive certainty of his having provided an atonement for our sins. The sacred Scripture is undoubtedly his own revelation; for it is impossible that its fundamental truths especially could have ever been

conceived by mere men if left to themselves. The infinitely perfect character it gives us of God—the Saviour of perfect love, gentleness, purity, wisdom, and boldness it describes—and the perfectly holy nature of the salvation it unfolds—and all this consistently maintained and developed by writers of every grade of life, of different countries, and composed in different generations, many of them very remote from each other, all prove to a positive certainty, that in compassion to our ignorance, God has given us the light of his Word as a sure guide to the way of everlasting peace; or in the words of Scripture itself, that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

And what, then, does this Word of God, or letter from God, tell us about the sacrifice of Christ as the propitiation for our sins? It distinctly tells us that this is the remedy which God himself has provided and approves of as the means of the sinner's pardon and salvation. First, immediately after our first parents' sin

and fall, when they were trembling at the gloomy consequences of their crime, there comes, like the first cheering beam of the morning light, the proclamation of divine mercy in the bright promise, "that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head, although it should bruise his heel." As the next great unfolding of this divine remedy, there are the sacrifices of the Jewish dispensation enjoined by God himself upon his ancient people, as an atonement for their sins, but only as types and pledges of that great sacrifice which in the fulness of time the woman's seed was to offer up, once and for all, as the perfect atonement for man's guilt. And as the final development of this remedy, the sacred volume states, that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Nay, more, God tells us in his Word, that this remedy for man's guilt and misery, is the offspring of his own free, spontaneous love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved

us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And in order to show he did not love us unlawfully, or manifest his infinite love to us at the expense of the infinite righteousness of his character, his word also informs us, "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh: God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh; and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us."

Moreover, the atonement of Christ was not only provided, but also approved of by God as the remedy for man's guilt. Thus, in his word, it is described as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour;" and also stated, that "God raised up Christ from the dead, and gave him glory, that we, through faith in him, might have faith and hope in God."

Now, since this atonement, which Christ has made for our sins, is the remedy both provided and approved of by the Judge of all the earth, What does this fact prove? It shows that in every particular the remedy must be perfect,

and all-sufficient to accomplish the great purpose designed by it. Man may err, because he is imperfect. Indeed, as even a heathen philosopher wrote, "to err is human." But in all his attributes, God is not only perfect, but infinitely so; and therefore, it is as impossible for him to commit a mistake as it is for him to lie. Hence, as the atonement is his own devised and approved of remedy, in order to our pardon, peace, and salvation, as well as to satisfy the claims of his law against our guilt, and to maintain the interests of his government over all moral, intelligent creation, it must be in every way infinitely perfect. Mark,

II. *The atonement of Christ is perfect, because it was perfect substitution for the sinner.*

A correct understanding of this part of our subject is very material to the sinner's encouragement, peace, and hope. In order, then, to have a true notion of it, especially as two errors exist regarding it, let us here notice what it is not.

First, the atonement was not mere example. The Socinian theory is, that, as Christ was obedient unto death, he influences us, by his

example, to be obedient unto death also. Now this is partly true, but not the whole truth, and very far from it. It is partly true; because Scripture mentions that, as one of the purposes of the atonement, "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his footsteps." But, then, although one of the purposes, it is not all, nor even the chief purposes. This theory, if it means anything, makes our own obedience unto death—our own deeds of the law—the entire ground of our salvation; but does not God, through his servant Paul, declare that, "by the deeds of the law, no living flesh shall be justified." Or, if the whole merit of the atonement be said to consist in Christ's example influencing us to be thus obedient, what is this but making repentance the sole foundation of the sinner's pardon and peace? and so it is liable to almost all the serious objections we have recorded in the second chapter concerning mere repentance. For instance, it completely sets aside the justice of God against sin, and the claims of his law against its violation as matters of little or no account. Then it

does not harmonise with other portions of God's Word. For instance, in that Word it is said—"Christ bare our iniquities on his own body on the tree." Now, how can any one bear the burden of another—and our iniquities are a burden—unless by their being somehow transferred or imputed unto him? And, as Scripture says that "Christ bare our iniquities," the meaning must be that he, as our substitute, bore the penalty due unto us for them. And does not this prove that the atonement of Christ for our sins is something unspeakably more precious to us than that of mere example? Besides, essential to salvation as repentance is, yet it is not by repentance, but by faith in Christ, that we are said to be justified, and obtain peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And thus the Saviour also declares, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life."

Again, the atonement is not a mere display of God's infinite holiness and hatred of sin. This is what the advocates of the moral government

theory hold it to be. They say that if God pardoned the penitent sinner without manifesting his infinite hatred of sin, other intelligent creatures might be led to regard sin as a mere trifle, and be induced thereby to rebel, and so throw the affairs of God's government into confusion. Now, in order merely to keep all other intelligent beings in subjection, and induce other sinners of mankind to repent, they maintain that God, only as moral governor of the universe, and looking to its interests alone, felt himself bound, while freely pardoning the penitent sinner, to create a wholesome terror in the minds of all other intelligent creatures against sin, by showing its exceeding heinousness and danger, and his infinite hatred of it, in the sacrifice of his own Son for it. They positively deny that, in the atonement, or his mode of pardoning penitents, God has any respect either to the justice of his own personal character, or the righteous vindication of his broken law. This theory, like the preceding one, has much truth in it, but not all the truth. It is true that God is infinitely holy, and hates sin infinitely, and

that his giving his only-begotten Son as the propitiation for our sins, proves him to be so, as much as, if not more than, any punishment in eternity does. But, then, this is not the whole truth. It ignores, as the advocates of this theory themselves admit, both the personal justice of God, and the just claims of his violated law—denying that in the atonement of Christ these had any place. Now, what would be thought of any human governor, if in any important matter he acted only for the interests of his government, and had no respect to his own character as a just man, or to the claims of his own law as a righteous law? Who could, for any length of time, have either any respect for, or confidence in, such a defective ruler? And is it possible that God should so despise his own personal justice, and so contemn his own holy, wise, and good law, as to pardon any sinner, without these also being taken into account and satisfied? Besides, this theory does not harmonise with the more special passages in Scripture relating to the atonement. It is said, for instance, that "God is just, and yet the jus-

tifier of them that believe in Jesus;" but how could he be, or do so, unless Jesus, had as their substitute in the atonement, satisfied the claims of God's character as a Being of infinite justice? Again, another feature in the atonement is, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us;" but how could this be so, if, in the matter of our justification by Jesus, the righteous claims of the law were wholly set aside? Moreover, this theory, like the preceding one, either ignores or tries to explain away such passages as these: "He gave himself for us;" "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

What, then, is the real, essential nature of that atonement which Christ made for sinners? It was his substitution in their place. It means that he, as their substitute, stood in their law-room, took all their responsibilities to God's law upon himself, met them all, and satisfied them all. He did for the sinner just what any other substitute does for another. If I, for instance, owe a sum of money, and fail to pay it myself, whether by criminality or misfortune, then the

law of the country denounces me as a defaulter, and condemns me to suffer the penalty, whatever it is. But if any person offers to be my substitute; that is, of course, able to discharge all my obligations, and is accepted as such by the administrator of the law, and if he pays all my debt, or satisfies all the claims and penalties of the law against me, then, of course, as a matter of justice, I go free. Neither sovereign nor law can now condemn me. They cannot in justice demand that the debt or penalty be paid a second time. And as my substitute was accepted by the judge, and satisfied all the claims of the law for me, and was acknowledged to have done so, then, of course, in the eyes of both judge and law, I am justified, freed from the evil consequences of my defalcation, and am entitled to resume my place as if I had been no defaulter at all. In all points, this illustration, we admit, does not completely explain the atonement that Christ made for our iniquities. Nevertheless, it sufficiently explains its essential principle. We were, as proved in the first chapter, bound to keep the whole law

of God as the condition of our continuing to enjoy His life-giving favour. We failed to do so. As defaulters, therefore, we are naturally condemned, and liable to suffer the full penalty —"the soul that sinneth, it shall die." How, then, can we be justly pardoned, freed from this condemnation, and entitled again to God's favour? Only by a substitute, qualified and accepted, standing in our law-room, and satisfying all the demands of the law by being obedient even to the death for us. Now, Christ was and is this substitute. He occupied our law-room as our fully-qualified and accepted representative. By dying for us, he paid the penalty of our transgressions; and, therefore, there is now no condemnation to them that receive him as their substitute. But this is not all. His whole life on earth was a sacrifice, an atonement, a substitution for us. Hence, also, by his life-long perfect obedience he kept the whole law for us; and therefore, in virtue, not only of his vicarious death, but also of his vicarious life-obedience, we are, as a matter of mere justice, if in him by faith, not only freed

from the penalty of the law, but entitled to the reward of its fulfilment. In other words, we are justified, that is, pardoned, or freed from the condemnation that our sins deserve, and accepted or accounted righteous in God's sight, and entitled to his favour unto life eternal. This real substitution of Christ, as occupying our law-room, and discharging all the obligations and penalties of the law in our stead, is the only theory of the atonement that will harmonise with the declarations of God's Word, affirming "him to be just, and yet the justifier of them that believe on Jesus."

What, then, is the proof that Christ was our substitute, in the real, full meaning of the term? Take, first, this prophetic passage in Isaiah, "The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all." Now, what, in common life, does the administrator of the law do in the case of a substitute for a defaulter? He lays the defalcation—the penalty of it—or the obligations of the defaulter upon the substitute. So, then, this passage in Isaiah shows that, in the real meaning of the word, Christ was the substitute of the sinner.

In like manner the similar passage, "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree," proves the same thing. Or, again, take the passage, "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Now, the word redemption means the buying back from some evil by the paying of a ransom. From what, then, did Christ buy us back? "From the curse of the law," so that we have "forgiveness of sins." And what was the ransom he paid for us? "his own blood." So, then, in order to redeem us, he, as our ransom or substitute, endured the penalty of the law to which we were naturally exposed by our sins. As elsewhere stated in Scripture, "He gave himself for us;" and what does any other substitute do, but give himself for another? Thus, these passages of Scripture, as well as very many others, clearly show that, in regard to the penalty of the law, Christ died as the substitute of sinners in all the full meaning of the term. Take, now, one or two passages which prove that, in regard to "his fulfilling the law" by his life-obedience in order that the righteousness of the law may be ours, he

also occupied our law-room. Take, first, the parallel that is given in the Epistle to the Romans between Adam and Christ: "As by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one, many shall be made righteous." This evidently shows that Christ stood in a relation to us similar to that in which Adam did. Now the relation of Adam to us, as shown in the first chapter, was that of a representative or substitute. In fact, every representative is but a substitute. He stands, according to law, in the place of those whom he represents. As Adam, then, was our representative or substitute, his sin, in the eyes of the law, was our sin. Hence it is here said, "by his disobedience, many were made sinners." Now, as it is also here said in the same parallel, that, "by the obedience of Christ, many shall be made righteous," what can this mean but that, in his obedience also, as well as in his dying for us, Christ was our representative or substitute? Or, again, take this passage, "Therefore, by the deeds of the law, shall no flesh be justified in God's sight." What can this mean but

that, by his own obedience, because imperfect, no man can ever be reckoned just or righteous in the eyes of God? How, then, can this ever be the case with any man? The answer is, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And how can this be, except that he, as the substitute of every believer, obeyed the law in his stead, and his righteousness is reckoned or imputed unto him?

It is evident, then, that the Atonement of Christ, both in his active and passive obedience, was a real substitution for the sinner, in the commonly accepted meaning of the term. No other theory will harmonise with the chief passages that refer to it in Scripture, or meet all the necessities of the sinner's case. And not only was it substitution, but perfect substitution, satisfying all the claims of God's justice and all the demands of the law against sin; so that consistently with the justice of his character and the righteousness of his law, as well as the interests of his government, God can be merciful to the believing sinner. In other

words, Christ was in every respect a perfect substitute for the sinner; and, therefore, in freely pardoning and saving the sinner for Christ's sake, God is acting only justly as well as mercifully. This part of our subject—that Christ was a perfect substitute for the sinner—may be shown by his being appointed and approved of by God as such, by the divine dignity of his person, joined with his incarnation; by the holiness of his character, and by his voluntariness.

First, then, Christ was a perfect substitute for the sinner: because, as such, *he was appointed and approved of by God.* This, in another form, we have elsewhere shown already. In further proof, then, of his having been provided by God to be our substitute, be it here sufficient only to quote the declaration: "God made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" and Christ's own words—"I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." And in further proof of his having been approved of by

God in all he did as our substitute, let Peter's inspired testimony to his countrymen on the day of Pentecost suffice—"Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. This Jesus God hath raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ." There is nothing that could better show God's entire approval of Christ's work as our substitute than the facts that he raised him up from the dead, exalted him to his own right hand, and has made him both Lord and Christ to his redeemed people. What, then, is the obvious inference from this? Why, as God neither could nor would provide, or approve of an imperfect substitute, it follows that, in appointing Christ to be ours, and in accepting and rewarding him for what he did for

us, Christ's Atonement for our sins was a perfect substitution.

The divinity of Christ also shows that he was a perfect substitute for the sinner. Who was this "on whom the Lord laid the iniquities of us all?" He is called not only "the Son of God," "his well-beloved Son," but also "his only-begotten Son." Saints are sometimes called the sons of God, and so are holy angels in the sense of their being either created or born again of God. But they are not sons of God in the same sense that Christ is: for he is God's "only-begotten Son." Hence, it follows that Christ is the Son of God neither by creation nor by being born again. In what sense, then, is he God's Son? In common life the word "son" includes three things: one descended from a father and so posterior to him, sameness of nature, and close relationship between them. Now, as Christ was the Son of God neither by creation or second birth, the reason of his being called so must be obviously to denote that his nature is the same as God's, and that an intimate relation exists between God and him. Moreover,

we are not left to mere inference, but have direct and explicit statements in Scripture concerning this. Thus, Christ said of himself, "I and my Father are one." Paul also says of him, "who, being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God." He is spoken of also as "God manifest in the flesh." Add to all this his miracles. No mere man by his own power can work a miracle. Indeed, no mere man ever pretended to do so. Moses, it is true, as well as some others, wrought miracles; but then they did so in the name and through the power of God, or of Christ, as they themselves declare. But Christ wrought his miracles, almost every one, only in his own name, and through his own power. In calming the raging sea, in healing the sick, in multiplying the loaves and fishes, and in raising the dead, he spake, and it was done: showing both by the power, manner, and beneficence of his miracles, that he was "God manifest in the flesh:" an infinitely perfect substitute for the sinner; a divinely perfect deliverer to all them that should believe on him.

There must along with the divinity of Christ, be taken *his incarnation*, as this also was necessary to constitute him a perfect substitute for us. This mystery of the incarnation on account of its essential connection with the atonement, occupies a prominent place in God's Word. It is alluded to in the very first promise of mercy to the sinner as the Saviour is there called "the woman's seed." It is more fully unfolded in this prophecy of Isaiah, "Unto us a child is born: unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." It is recorded in the Gospels as having been accomplished by his being supernaturally born of the Virgin Mary, the importance of the event being exhibited at the time by the heraldry of the angels, the adoration of the Eastern magi, and Herod trembling for his tyrannical throne. And it is attested in the Epistles by the emphatic declaration: "When the fulness of the times was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under

the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And why was this incarnation of the Son of God necessary? Because he was to be the substitute of man—guilty, fallen, condemned man. In order to be this substitute, to bear the penalty due to the sinner, and fulfil the law for him, it was necessary that, in the same nature that sinned and fell he should obey and suffer. In his divine nature merely, he could not occupy our law-room and be obedient unto the death for us; and therefore, if he was to be man's substitute at all, he must become man also, and be made under the law.

Thus, the very mysterious constitution of the Saviour's person, as the God-man, or God manifest in the flesh, proves that he was a perfect substitute for us. By his divine nature he could understand and sympathize with all the claims of God and his law and government against sin, and not only do this, but had divine ability to meet and satisfy them all. Then by his human nature he could feel and sympathise with the sinner in all his difficulties, helpless-

ness, and miseries; and therefore was able to do all things necessary in order to meet the sinner's case, as a kind, compassionate Saviour. By his divine nature he had what no angel has —"power to lay down his life" for us, "and power to take it up again;" while, by his human nature, he had a life to lay down as the propitiation for our sins. By his divine nature he was not, as even all angels are, subject to the law of God; and therefore, by his obedience to it in our nature, as a matter of supererogation, he did work out a perfect righteousness for us. Had he only been divine, he could neither have lived nor died for us, nor been able to sympathize with our infirmities. Had he only been a human or even an angelic creature, he could neither have been fully able to sympathise with God, nor satisfy the claims of his law and government against sin, nor resume his life after laying it down for us. Hence, it is evident that no mere divine being, nor any mere human or angelic being, could be a proper substitute for us, but that the two natures must be combined in one person, in order to be so. Hence, it fol-

lows that the incarnation of God's Son, his being human as well as divine in his person, was absolutely necessary, in order to constitute him a perfect substitute for the sinner. And hence, it follows, that the fact of the incarnation is the most encouraging and consoling feature in God's mercy the sinner can have. If Christ were only man I could not repose my soul's salvation upon him; for how could any mere man, helpless and dying himself, be an all-sufficient Saviour to me. Or, if he were only God, I would, as a sinner against him, be afraid to come near him. But, because he wears my own nature, and so loved me as to die in that nature for me, I have all encouragement to come unto him: while, because he is divine, I can thoroughly confide in him, as "able to save unto the very uttermost all that come unto God through him."

The perfect holiness of Christ's character likewise shows his substitution for the sinner to have been perfect. An impure being could not be accepted as a substitute by the infinitely pure God. Nor could a guilty being, as the life of all such is naturally forfeited. The ancient

scriptural and even heathen sacrifices, by the victim being an animal without any defect, all typified that only the life of a perfectly holy being could be a satisfactory atonement for the sinner. *This* Christ was. In him was no sin. Pilate, who condemned him, declared that he found no fault in him. Judas, who betrayed him, confessed that he had sinned in betraying innocent blood. Even the demons whom he cast out, acknowledged that he was "the Holy One of God." His adversaries could convict him of no transgression. His friends proclaimed him to be "the Holy One and the Just." And God, by the voice from heaven at the beginning of his ministry, and by raising and exalting him to his right hand, bore testimony that he was "his well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased." Thus, by his perfect life-obedience, he magnified the law and made it honourable for us, or is the Lord our righteousness; and thus, in dying for us, he was a perfect sacrifice. Hence, it is said that, "through the eternal Spirit, he offered himself without spot unto God;" and also that "we are

redeemed, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

And *the voluntary nature of Christ's Atonement* proves the perfection of his substitution for sinners. If he had been unwilling to carry out the purpose of God in providing an all-sufficient propitiation for our sins, or if he had had no love or compassion for sinners, it is evident that his unwilling sacrifice could neither have been acceptable to God nor calculated to win our confidence. But he was as willing to be our substitute as God was to give him. "It is my meat and my drink," he said, "to do my Father's will." True, once in the garden of Gethsemane, when "the hour" had come, he with strong cries and tears and sweatings, as of great drops of blood, entreated, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And is it any wonder that the human nature attached to his divinity should thus be pained and shrink back? If you yourself, however willingly, were about to suffer as a substitute for a condemned criminal the extreme penalty

of the law, would not your nature tremble and shrink back also, in prospect of the agony and shame before you? And remember what Christ was about to endure. It was not the mere wrath of man, but the wrath of God against sin. And is it not but natural that, when "the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all," his human nature, even supported as it was by his divine, should groan under the unspeakably awful load? Assuredly, the greater wonder would have been if he had not groaned at all. Nevertheless, though there was for a moment an apparent hesitation, yet there was no change in his determination to carry out the Father's purpose of infinite love to us as well as his own. Hence, he immediately added, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." *This* was also his own settled will: for it is written that he delighted not only to do the Father's will, but "he so loved us, that he gave himself for us." Thus, by the voluntary nature of his sacrifice, he both glorified the mercy of God and gave the utmost assurance of his willingness to save. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted

him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Consider,

III. *The Atonement of Christ is perfect; because it is perfectly efficacious in its saving results.*

Either of the preceding arguments, taken by itself, is quite sufficient to assure us of the completeness of Christ's atonement for our sins. Taken together, they doubly assure us that it is so. But in order to remove all possible fears that may naturally arise from guilt, death, and judgment; and that the penitent sinner may in believing, enjoy present peace, hope, and comfort, as well as be finally saved, the God of all comfort multiplies line upon line, and precept upon precept, in his word, to show the all-sufficient results that spring from his Son's substitution for us. There is not a blessing necessary to our ultimate salvation, nor to

our consolation in this life, but his word shows that we may obtain it through faith in the propitiation of our Saviour.

The main difficulty here is to make a proper selection, for space would fail us to allude to them all. The most important and essential, however, we shall notice.

First, it *secures* reconciliation to God. Sin, of course, has naturally created variance between God and us. So long as the variance continues, it is impossible that he can bestow full favour upon us, or we have peace and hope in him. The very first thing, then, in order to our personal salvation, is, that God must not only be reconciled to us, but we also reconciled to him. Then, when the parties are brought together again in friendship, then will the "love of God be our life, and his loving-kindness better than life." Now, in regard to God, he was always disposed to be in fellowship with us. There was not a time but his desire was to meet us again in peace and love. But in order that he might be able to carry this desire into practical effect consistently with his own righteous char-

acter, law, and government, it was necessary, as we have shown, that his Son, as our substitute, should become the propitiation for our sins. Yea, so desirous was God to carry out his purposes of saving love to us, that he himself devised and furnished that propitiation; and hence his word informs us, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Thus, the atonement of Christ secured God's practical reconciliation unto us. At the same time it is perfectly efficacious in securing the reconciliation of all believers to God. How? Because it removes all their fears of him, destroys their natural enmity against him, and allures them to him, saying, "we love God, because he first loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And hence, we have such statements in Scripture as these: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;" "if when we were sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "And you that were some-

time alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled through the blood of his cross."

Again, it secures access to God. Not only do we require to be reconciled unto him, but to have access to his ear of mercy, so that he may listen favourably to our prayers, and give us grace to help us in our time of need. And this access is secured to us by the atonement of our Saviour. Like criminals, we do not now need to come before the throne of grace trembling and fearful, lest God may refuse to hearken to our petitions. In all the confidence and certainty with which a child draws nigh to its earthly parent, so through the merits of Jesus as the way, we may now draw nigh unto God in the full assurance that he will graciously hear us. Hence, the Saviour tells us that, when we pray, we should look up to God and address him as "Our Father." Hence, an apostle says—having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near, with a true heart in the full assurance of faith." Nay, he adds even

more strongly, that, as "we now have in Jesus, not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Moreover, it secures the remission of sin. By his atonement, Jesus paid all the debts his people owed to the law; and as God neither can nor will be so unjust as to exact payment of a debt a second time, he freely and fully remits all the sins of those that in faith accept of Jesus as the substitute. And hence such passages as these occur in Scripture: "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin;" we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" and "therefore there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Further, it secures justification with God. Mere remission of sin only frees from hell. A criminal may be pardoned, and yet not be received into favour or good society. So, in order

to our full salvation, we require more than mere pardon. We require also to be accepted of God, treated by him as if we were righteous, and have a proper, legitimate title to heaven. In other words, we need to be justified in God's sight. And this justification is secured by Christ's obedience unto the death for us. And therefore we have these expressions in the divine record, "being now justified by his blood," God made him to be a sin-offering for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" and "God is just, and yet the justifier of them that believe in Jesus."

Still further, it secures sanctification. It is necessary, not only that we have a just title to heaven, but that, by holiness of nature and disposition, we be meet for it. If a man had no taste or education, if he were only of a vulgar, brutal nature, then, even though he fell heir to an estate, he would not be fit to enjoy it, or qualified to mingle with others of the like fortune. Still more is this the case in regard to heaven. Nothing unholy can enter there. A

man whose tastes and habits are unholy, could neither enjoy its pure scenes nor blessed society. Hence, it is necessary that we be purified in order to dwell with and enjoy the pure and lovely in our Father's celestial home. Now, this renewal of our heart and mind is secured by the atonement of Jesus. So God's word testifies—"the blood of Christ shall purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." "Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it and present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Further still, it secures eternal redemption. Thus the divine record states—"by his own blood he entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." This redemption, as numerous passages testify, includes deliverance from all evil, and the possession of all bliss for ever. And where is this enjoyed?

It begins here, on believing; but it is chiefly enjoyed in heaven, where is God's special presence, and the Saviour, and the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. By sin man had forfeited heaven; but, by his propitiation for our sins, Christ has purchased it back for us. Hence it is called "the purchased possession;" as also an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." And this redemption includes the whole man, both soul and body. The soul of the believer is so redeemed that it never dies, never tastes the bitterness of the sentence; "the soul that sinneth it shall die: but on believing the germ of a new spiritual life is begun in it that grows on continuously unto life eternal. Hence the Saviour's words—"If a man keep my saying he shall never taste of death, but is passed from death unto life, even life everlasting." And how is this carried out? By his soul, when the earthly tabernacle dissolves, being conveyed quicker than the electric spark, into the Father's house not made with hands, eternal in the

heavens. And hence Paul says, "for me to die is"—not shall be, but is—"gain;" and also intimates that, when "absent from the body," he would be "present with the Lord." And the body also of the believer is included in this eternal redemption. Though now a weak, corruptible body, soon to moulder with the dust, yet, being redeemed as well as the soul, it shall, in the resurrection, be again united unto the soul, a spiritual, incorruptible, powerful, glorious body, "like unto Christ's own glorious body." And so, as completely redeemed humanity, shall "the saints be for ever with the Lord," "where there is no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain, but where God will wipe away all tears from their eyes."

In addition to all this it secures the gift of the Holy Spirit. And this gift is as necessary to our salvation as is the atonement of Christ itself. The work of Christ is something out of us; and how is this outward work to be applied to us, or our minds and hearts prepared to receive and be nourished by it? It is by the gift

of the Spirit—the Spirit acting through the truth directly upon our spirits, quickening, renewing, enlightening, and comforting them. Hence, the Scriptures tell us, that "no man can see or enter into the kingdom of God, except he be born of the Spirit." In the growth of any kind of grain, there is more required than the seed and the soil, and the casting of the seed into the soil. If you cast seed into the ground in winter, for instance, it will not grow. And why? It requires heat—the heat of spring—to quicken it into life, ere it can draw nourishment from the soil. Without that heat the seed would remain inert or become corrupt in the soil. So in the matter of our personal salvation. There is more required than the knowledge of Christ's atonement being put into our souls. The Holy Spirit, like the heat, is required to act upon our souls, that are by nature spiritually dead, and to quicken them, so that they may derive nourishment from the truths of the Gospel. Without the Holy Spirit's thus quickening the soul, all knowledge of Christ's saving work would remain in it dead, impas-

sive, or become corrupted in it. Hence, not only does God's Word declare the work of the Spirit in our hearts to be necessary, but the Spirit is there set forth as the author of the new birth, the enlightener, the sanctifier, and the comforter. And this essential gift of the Holy Spirit is secured to believers by the atonement of Christ, as the reward of his obedience and sufferings for them. Thus, it is affirmed in God's Word—"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Thus, in regard to the great awakening and conversion on the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter says, "This Jesus, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." And thus the Saviour says—"If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, and He will guide you into all truth." And lastly, it is the security for our

obtaining other blessings necessary to final, perfect salvation. Thus, in order to assure believers that nothing essential to their true welfare shall be omitted, the record of eternal life contains the exclamation—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Thus, then, the efficacious results secured by the atonement, reconciliation, access to God, remission of sin, a title to heaven, a meetness for it, redemption of soul and body, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and all other things necessary, and all these producing peace and joy, and hope in the believing heart, likewise show that the substitution of God's Son for us was perfect. And,

IV. *The Atonement of Christ is perfect; because it is perfectly free to "whosoever believeth."*

The light of the sun is not only necessary and pleasant, but free to every one it reaches. The fountain, that God makes to well out on the highway or in the desert, is free to all who approach it. Even so the atonement, with

all its enriching blessings, is free to every sinner on earth, without exception, to whom the knowledge of it comes. But as a man must open his eyes, before he can enjoy the sun's light—or as he must drink of the fountain, before it can quench his thirst—so he must believe in the atonement, before it can become operative to his personal peace and salvation.

In the whole Word of God, there is not a single case recorded of a saint's enjoying his special favour, or a sinner's receiving his mercy, except in the exercise of faith. Thus, not only Moses, Abraham, and David, but the dying thief, the Philippian jailer, and the Syro-Phœnician woman, were all highly blessed by Him, but only because they were or became believers. And thus, by examples, God teaches us that, if we would be pardoned, accepted, or rejoice in His favour, we must believe in His gracious character and communications to us.

The precepts of God's Word also assert the same truth. They all show the necessity of faith on the sinner's part, ere he can be a par-

taker of saving mercy and grace. So long as he remains unbelieving, he has no lot or part in the atonement. Thus, it is said—"without faith, it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." It is also stated that those Israelites, who perished in the desert, could not enter into the promised land, because of their unbelief; and therefore argues the apostle, "let us fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into that rest that remaineth for the people of God, any of us should come short of it by unbelief." Nay, the Saviour affirms "he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God," and He makes this affirmation even more emphatic by the words "he that believeth not shall be damned." And then, in regard to the lost, one of their characteristics is, that they were "unbelieving."

On the other hand, it is positively declared that every blessing, secured by the substitution of God's Son for us, may be obtained through

faith or trust in it. Thus, in regard to this substitution, the Son of God says, "He that believeth shall be saved." Thus, to the Philippian jailer's question, "What shall I do to be saved?" the apostle answers, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And thus we have also many passages like these "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and "whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

It is evident, therefore, from all these passages, that personal faith in the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ is essential to our having a personal saving interest in it. The question, therefore, is reduced to this, who may believe in it, or has a right to rely on it, to his or her personal salvation? The answer is, any person whatever that only wills. It is God's remedy for the sinner's ruin, and He freely offers it to any sinner that will through faith receive and rely on it, as his free gift unto life eternal. The divine volume leaves us in no doubt about

this. Thus, the Saviour Himself says, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." In another form, He makes the same affirmation, "whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no-wise cast out." The same assurance is repeated by Him in His apocalyptic vision to the beloved disciple "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; and if any man open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me." This same disciple himself says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Christ Jesus, the righteous." And Paul also affirms that "Christ is able to save unto the very uttermost all that come unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

Thus, then, no matter what a man may be, he has the warrant of God's word, that, if he only believe in Christ, as the propitiation for his sins, he will obtain all the blessings that spring from that propitiation. If any person, therefore, ask "if I believe in the Saviour,"

shall I be saved?" the answer is, "Yes;" for it is "whosoever believeth." But another person, no worse in character than his neighbours, but who is suffering under a deep conviction of sin, may put the same question tremblingly as if his sins were so great as to exclude him from mercy; and the same answer "yes" is to be given him; for it "is whosoever cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out. But "I," says another sinner, "have not only been ungodly, but guilty of breaking both the sixth and seventh commandments, and can there be mercy for me?" Yes; for it is, "whosoever believeth," and the "blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin." But "I," adds another sinner, "have, even till very old age, violated all laws, both human and divine—have despised both warnings and invitations—gloried all my past life in my shame—have, in short, given my whole life to the service of the devil; and do you mean to say that God will now pardon me, and accept of the very dregs of my life, and grant unto such as I am an entrance into His everlasting kingdom?" "Yes,"

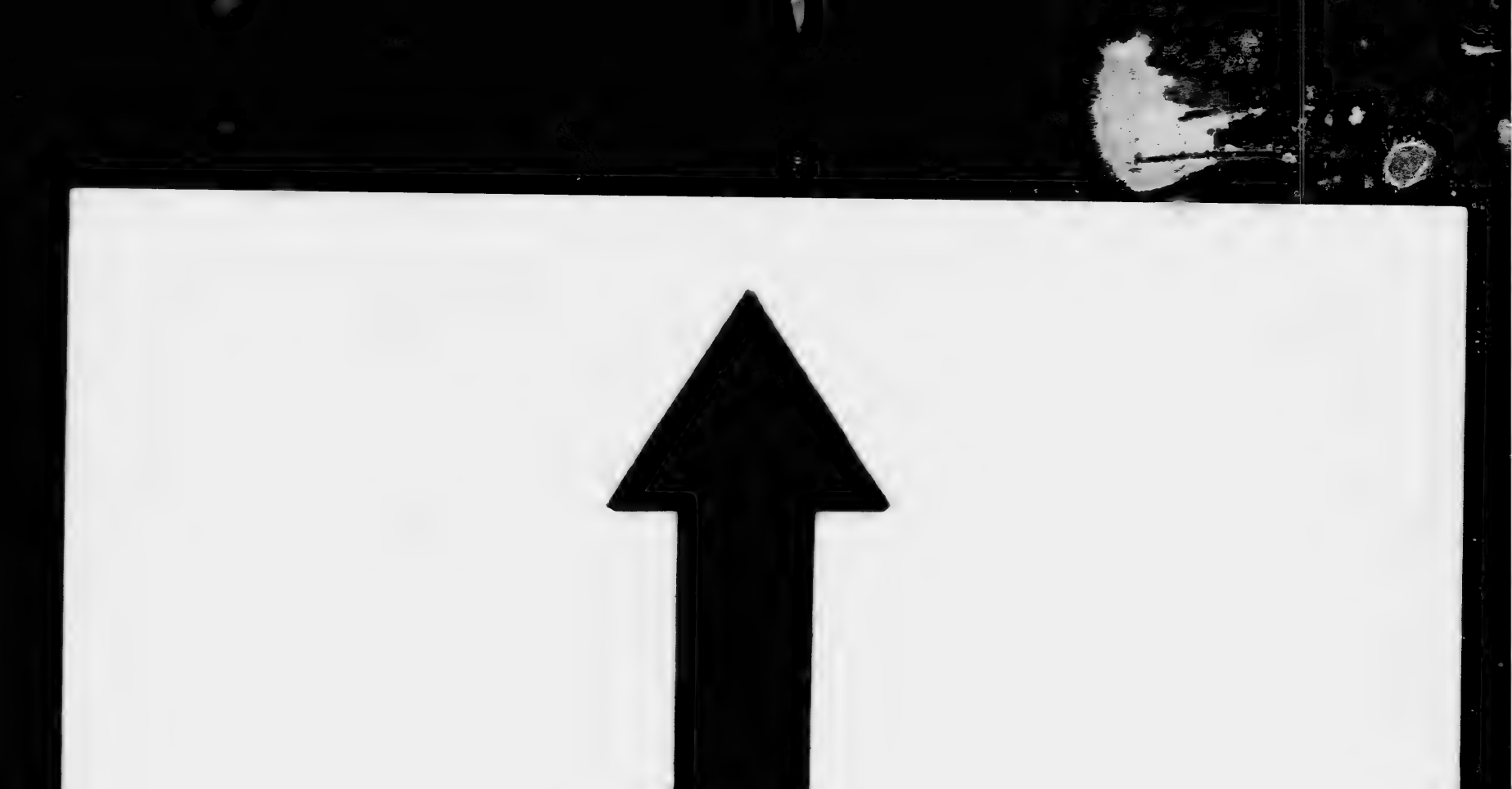
for it is "whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life." But, adds yet another transgressor, "I have backsliden repeatedly and most grievously; and is it possible that I can be forgiven, and recieved again into the kingdom of God's dear Son?" "Yes;" for it is "I will in nowise cast out. Return unto me, O backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding, and love you freely."

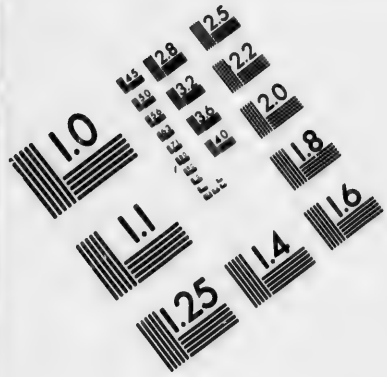
In support of all this, we have not only precept but example. Manasseh, king of Judah, was one of the very worst characters on earth; yet through believing prayer he obtained mercy. The dying thief was not only infamous in life, but came to Christ only at the last hour; and yet, on account of his faith, he also received most gracious, saving welcome. On the day of Pentecost many of those who, in a greater or less degree, crucified the Lord of Glory, had the offer of salvation through His blood made unto them; and not a few of even these found both mercy and peace in believing. Thus, no matter what the age, the rank, the colour, the country, or the character of the sinner—Greek or Jew,

free or barbarian—even though his si ere as scarlet and red as crimson, yet, if he only believes in the atoning blood of Jesus as God's remedy for his sins, He is forgiven, accepted, and will be finally saved.

Here, then, we see is good news indeed. There is not only a divine remedy provided for our guilt, but this remedy is brought down to our moral weakness, and whosoever will may obtain and appropriate it to himself simply by believing. Does not this freeness, as well as the other qualities, show that the atonement which God's Son has made for our sins is perfect: all that could possibly be desired to give us present true peace, as well as secure our ultimate redemption?

The only barrier, then, to your personal salvation, reader, is your own personal belief. Every obstacle is removed, every blessing secured by the satisfaction of Christ, as the substitute of sinners; and all that God now requires you to do is, look, believe, accept, and be saved. But why do you ask, is there such vast importance attached to the simple act of





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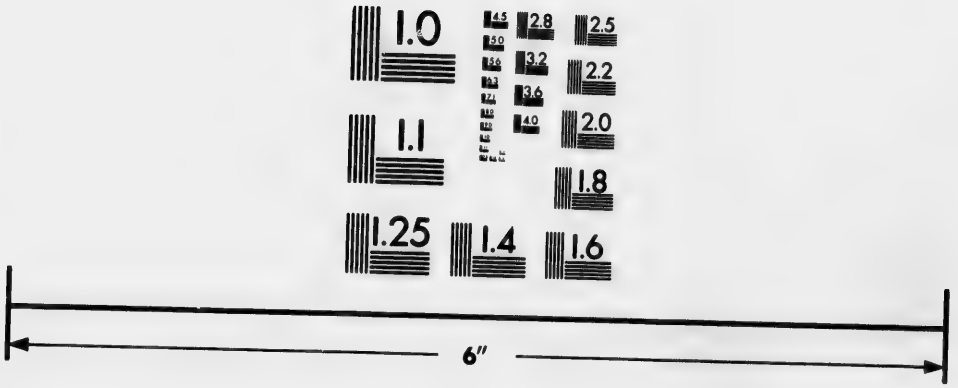

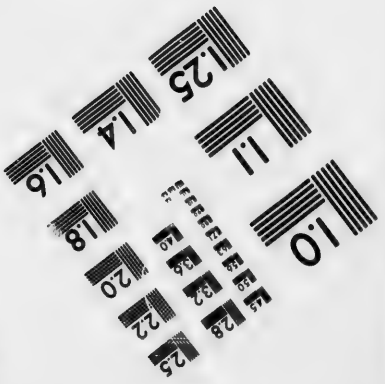

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believing? For many reasons. There is the reason of common sense. Your own common sense tells you that there is scarcely one single blessing, however free, but requires some act on your own part to make it yours. The air, so essential to your health and life, is freely given you by God; but, then, in order to its doing you any good, it must be breathed by you, and no one can do this for you. In the like manner the atonement of Jesus, so essential to your divine pardon, must be embraced by the exercise of your own personal faith, ere you can personally be a partaker of its benefits. Moreover, even in regard to the business and temporal bounties of common life, nothing could be obtained or done without faith. The former, for instance, would neither plough the soil nor sow the seed, unless he had faith that a crop would be the result. And the merchant could not carry on his business unless he trusted his clerks, and trusted in a coming profit, and was trusted himself. So, in regard to Christ's work, as our Saviour, we neither would nor could do anything to be saved by it, unless we had faith

in it as God's remedy for our guilt and ruin. Besides, this faith is required by God as a token of our creature-dependence upon Him. It is right that He, as our Supreme Sovereign, should impose some test upon his intelligent creatures, in order either to their enjoying or regaining His favour; and what easier test, in order to our pardon and salvation, could He impose upon us, than that of simple faith in the gift of His Son for us? And, then, as man first fell by unbelief in God's Word of threatening against sin, so it is only natural in God to make our restoration depend upon our faith in His promise to us through His grace in Christ Jesus.

And now, what more do we require, or could we desire, to find true peace, hope, and joy, in trusting to Jesus as our loving, all-sufficient Saviour? Is there not enough in the divine word, to show that His atonement for our sins is perfect, nothing awanting, nothing needing to be added, but simply our looking to and resting upon it? Surely the revealed facts that it is God's remedy, was perfect substitution for us, is completely efficacious in its saving re-

sults, and freely offered to all, are amply sufficient to convince our mind, heart, and conscience, that every sinner of mankind on earth that trusts in it as his salvation, shall be saved. So, then, if our guilty fears are dispelled, and if we are rejoicing in the hope of glory, it is because the grace of God in Christ has done all for us, and left us only the task of accepting free, full, and perfect salvation. And, therefore, truly and joyfully we may exclaim—"As for God, His way is perfect. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

CHAPTER IV.

DIFFICULTIES, ERRORS, AND OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."—1 Cor. i. 2, 3.

A CERTAIN Scotch minister of the cold morality school, whose imagination must have been stronger than his judgment, declared to his people that truth is so lovely and attractive in itself, that it needs only to be stated in order to be admired and adopted. But, alas! it is not so. No doubt truth is mighty, and will ultimately prevail; but, as it has to contend with all the ignorance, prejudices, and selfish interests of fallen nature,

it will gain the victory only after a severe struggle. There never was, perhaps, any single truth promulgated, but met, especially at first, with more enemies than friends. Every scientific man knows this in regard to the truths of science. Every moral philosopher knows that moral truth is a hatred and a mockery, especially to the vicious, dishonest, and impure. Much more is this the case with spiritual, religious, or saving truth. God spake truth to Adam in Paradise, when He said, "the soul that sinneth it shall die;" but how soon did Satan pervert that truth, and Adam disbelieve it! The Jews were ever prone, as their whole history shows, to depart from the true God and follow falsehoods. The degraded state of the heathen proves that, instead of cleaving to truth, they have rather loved and fallen into the grossest delusions. The Saviour, who was the truth itself, instead of being readily embraced on His first appearance, was rejected and despised, and crucified. And, in the Apostle Paul's day, nearly two thousand years ago, our text shows that the atonement, God's remedy

for man's guilt and ruin, had its enemies as well as its friends. To the self-righteous Jews, who delighted only in outward rites and ceremonies, it was a stumblingblock; and to the intellectually proud Greeks who regarded the speculation of their own brains as the measure of all truth it was foolishness. And there are Jews and Greeks still, men who neglect, misrepresent, and oppose God's plan of salvation in Jesus, and who esteem their own devices and ceremonies as of far greater account. No doubt the sacrifice of Christ for us had its friends from the very beginning: has always been drawing more friends to itself, and will increase their number more and more until "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ." But, at present, as everybody knows, there are many who are ignorant of it, misunderstand it, misrepresent it, and oppose it, as if it were only foolishness and a stumblingblock.

In regard to this fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, there are three great sources of error. There is, first, man's natural depravity. A man

can see no beauty or advantage in what he hates. And "as man's natural mind is enmity against God," so, of course, he naturally sees no propriety or profit in this remedy that the mercy of God has in Christ provided for his salvation. There is, next, man's ignorance. Of course when he knows nothing about the atonement at all, as God's mercy to him, he is careless about it; and when he has only an imperfect and distorted knowledge of it, his judgment upon it is, of course, more or less erroneous. And, especially, there is man's pride of intellect. There are not a few men who practically regard their own finite reason as infallible and as the measure of all truth: and who think that, because the atonement is in many points beyond their comprehension, or does not harmonize altogether with their likings, they are justified in wholly casting it aside, or trying to alter it so as to please their own finite, fallen judgment. Hence, in regard to this greatest doctrine of God's Gospel, because some men have tried to be wise above what is written, and others are content to be wise below it, there are many

prevalent errors. On the doctrine, perhaps, more than any other of the gospel, men, "professing themselves to be wiser than God, have become fools."

If any man imagines that he can fully comprehend all the points in this greatest, most mysterious truth of God's Gospel, he labours under a most grievous delusion. It is God's mystery; and hence He only can fully understand it. It is, perhaps, absolutely impossible not only for the most gifted man, but even for the highest archangel to comprehend it, even though he study it to all eternity. As the finite cannot comprehend the infinite—as the human can never fully understand the divine—so this "great mystery of godliness" must ever in many points remain a mystery to us. Nevertheless, even the wayfaring man, though very unlearned, can easily understand it as a revealed fact in God's Word, and rest on it to the salvation of his soul.

There is, indeed, not a single thing, even the most common, that can be fully understood by man. Take for instance the magnetic needle

Why, although you turn it in any other direction, does it always, if left to itself, return and point to the north? No man can understand that. All that he knows about it is, that it is a fact it does so, or that God wills it to do so; and the knowledge of the simple fact is all-sufficient to enable the traveller to pass through the pathless desert, or the sailor to cross the trackless ocean to his desired haven. Or, again, take a single atom of dust. Into how many parts can it yet be divided? what is its past history? on what part of the globe did it first come into existence? and what will be its career in the distant future? We know it is an atom of dust, and that is about all that any man knows of it. Or take further, the mysterious union of our soul and body, making us but one person. How is it that the soul—a spiritual, thinking, remembering, willing, anticipating essence—influences the body—merely organized matter—to do what it pleases? Or, how is it that the body, in its languor or its vigour, tends generally to dull the soul or animate it? Or, on what principle is it that they keep united,

until it pleases God at death to dissolve the union? No one can tell; and yet every one understands that it is a fact; and the knowledge of the mere fact is sufficient to enable any one to discharge many of the most important duties of life. Even infinitely more so is it, and must it be, with the incarnation and sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son for our sins. It is "the great mystery of godliness," and therefore a mystery infinitely above man's finite comprehension. Yet it is plainly and fully, as we showed in the third chapter, revealed in God's Word as a fact; and every person of sane mind can, as in the cases of the magnetic needle and union of soul and body, understand it, believe it, and act on it as a fact, to his present peace and future salvation. Now, as no one would be justified in denying the existence of an atom of dust, because he does not understand all about it, as the sailor would be a fool to discard the magnetic needle because he can apprehend so very little about it, as the man would be mad that would have nothing to do with his own soul and body, because he understood the

principle neither of their union nor of their influence on each other; even so the sinner that denies, discards, or neglects the atonement that God through the incarnation has provided for sin, because it is in many points far beyond his comprehension, acts not only unreasonably, but foolishly and madly. In all things that are essential to our peace, hope, and salvation, God has in His Word made known the all-sufficiency of His Son's substitution for us; and therefore, if we reject it for any reason whatever, we are guilty of despising God's mercy and rebelling against His authority. If we in anywise refuse to accept of His remedy just as He lays it down, or if we tamper with it as if we could improve upon it, we are guilty of the monstrous presumption of thinking that we possess more wisdom than the All-wise God. Our simple duty as well as safety is, to accept it, just as God has in His word revealed it unto us.

As it is impossible, then, for any man to understand or explain perfectly all the difficulties connected with Christ's propitiation for our sins, we shall not even profess to do so. In regard

to the whole subject it becomes every one, as a creature of God, and a sinner against Him, not to be proud and profane, but humble, docile, and reverent, thankfully willing to receive and believe whatever God's Word graciously communicates to us. Nevertheless, in order to try to help to a better understanding of this momentous matter, and to remove errors, and to withstand gainsayers, some of the more prominent difficulties we shall notice.

The first difficulty connected with the atonement we notice, is the somewhat vulgar error, that it represents God to be cruel. Some persons naturally imagine that God must, indeed, be very cruel and vindictive to put His own innocent Son to death for transgressors. These persons do not, of course, wish that transgressors should be left themselves to endure the penalty of their sins, but they think it would have been far better if God had spared His own Son and the transgressors also. This error very often arises in the ignorant mind and causes it much perplexity; and, of course, the enemies of the Gospel try to make the most of this error.

Now, in reply to this, we ask, what is cruelty? It is pain inflicted unjustly or unlawfully, or without a proper motive and purpose, or against a substitute's will. Now, who will dare to say, that, in punishing His Son as the sinner's substitute, God acted unjustly or unlawfully, since that very punishment was a satisfying of His violated law, that is holy, and wise, and good? Or, who will dare to say that, in giving up His Son to death for us, God acted without a proper motive and purpose, since even that very Son tells us "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life?" Or, who will dare to say that God gave up His Son to death for sinners, against that Son's own consent—seeing that Son Himself said, that it was "His meat and His drink to do His Father's will:" that "He, as the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for the sheep;" and that He, as Paul says, "loved me, and gave Himself for me." To suppose, then, that the atonement represents God to be cruel is the false supposition of ignorance or of

hatred to God's gospel. It represents God, not to be cruel, but only just to his own righteous character and law, and yet loving and merciful to us. Moreover, if Christ "endured the cross, and despised the shame" for us, it was also "for the joy set before him"—the glorious reward of the mediatorial crown, that God was to bestow upon him for his obedience unto the death. And here we turn the tables upon the advocates of this error. We ask then, how many kinds of cruelties has not the atonement abolished? Where it is unknown, parents have and do still offer up their children in sacrifice, as a propitiation for their sins; but, wherever the knowledge of Christ's sacrifice comes, all these and many other cruel sacrifices are given up. How many thousands of devotees have inflicted, and still inflict, most horrible tortures upon themselves, in order to obtain divine pardon and acceptance? This cruelty also is removed by the knowledge and belief of Christ's perfect atonement for sin. How many thousands upon thousands have suffered intensely by a perplexed mind, an anxious heart, and a stricken conscience, in view

of sin, death, and judgment; and found peace—a peace passing all understanding—through believing that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin." Thus, facts upon facts shew that the atonement of Jesus for our sins, instead of being an act of cruelty on God's part, has been the means of abolishing countless cruelties and sufferings in this world, as well as of preserving millions "from the wrath to come."

The second difficulty in regard to this doctrine we notice is, an objection raised by the over-critical, or those that would be wise above what is written. They assert that Christ could not die as the substitute of sinners; because neither the words of the sentence, nor the nature of the evil, made it allowable. Thus, in regard to the sentence—"the soul that sinneth, it shall die"—they put a special emphasis upon the "it," and assert that this "it," or soul that sinneth, and no other, must, according to the sentence, bear the penalty. But, in asserting this, they assert far more than they imagine, or are willing to stand by. Are they willing to admit, that this "it"—the sinning soul—and

that is every sane person on earth—should be for ever lost? No such thing. Hence, even while they place a special emphasis upon the "it," they try to explain away the "sinneth" and "die" as meaning only a comparatively light guilt and light penalty. But such inconsistency in their criticism will not do. If they make the "it" emphatic, they must make the "die" emphatic also; and, as every one on earth has sinned, and the sentence leaves the sinning soul under the power of death, it follows that, if their criticism were carried out consistently, every soul must for ever perish, and that even the mercy of God cannot interfere to save them. Thus, their mode of criticism proves too much even for themselves.

In interpreting a deceased person's will, for instance, we must take the whole will, and not a mere part of it. Suppose the will ran thus—"I leave all my property to my eldest son, John, except a certain house to James, and so many acres to Mary." What would be thought of the judge that would, looking only to the first part of the will, give all to John, the house

and acres also? Would it be fair, or according to the whole will honestly interpreted? Even a fool would see that the judge was deciding wrongly, in not taking the will as a whole, and allowing the one clause to explain and modify the other. So must every interpreter, if he would be honest, deal with God's word, in pronouncing judgment upon any doctrine. Every clause pertaining to the doctrine must be looked at, in order to come to a true decision upon the whole. It will not do to look at the sentence against sin alone, condemning the sinning soul to death. The same Scripture, that reveals the condemnation, also reveals the remedy: although "the wages of sin is death," yet "the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus." If, then, the over-critical upon the scriptural sentence would take the scriptural remedy also into account, which common honesty binds them to do, they would not come to the absurd, as well as fearful, conclusion that the mercy of God could not, by the substitution of his Son in our stead, provide salvation for us.

These objectors also urge that Christ could not die, as the substitute of sinners; because the nature of the case, being that of guilt, does not admit of substitution. And what is their proof? In human Governments, they say, substitutes are not allowed to suffer for criminals and, therefore, they infer that, in God's government over us, a substitute for the sinner is not admissible either. It is, however, rather too much to infer that, because man does not, or cannot, do a certain thing, God cannot do it; for this is making man's finite ability or custom the limit of the infinite Sovereign's ability or custom. Moreover, it is not altogether true that human Governments, in cases of guilt, do not or cannot admit of a substitute. There is no law, so far as we know, in any statute-book under the sun, forbidding such a thing. In the case of a criminal, for instance, condemned to die for murder, there never was, perhaps, a substitute allowed by any human Government; because there never was, perhaps, a human substitute willing to die for such a person; and because, as no human Government can give a

new heart to any man, the allowing of a murderer to go free would be perilous to the lives of the community. But, in every other case, where no interest of the state would suffer, and where an adequate substitute presents himself to satisfy the demands of the law, it ever has been customary for human society to admit of a substitute. More than once, as history testifies, Governments have allowed a man to take his condemned friend's law-place, and suffer slavery, or imprisonment, or even death for him, while the friend escaped. Then, in the cases of mutiny, treason, and rebellion, where the law condemns all to death, it is common for Governments, if civilized, to put only one or two to death, not merely because they deserve death themselves, but also, as the casting of the lots or the voluntary offer of the victims signifies, as the substitutes of all the others, that are allowed to go free. And, then, in all securities for money matters, and of enlistments in the army—in both of which there is often criminality, and a subjecting of the innocent to loss of property in the one, and loss of life in the other

—substitutes are permitted and demanded by all human societies as things of every-day occurrence. Now, as human Governments thus commonly permit a substitute to satisfy the law, while the exposed or condemned party goes free, and that too whenever a proper substitute presents himself, and no interest of the Government suffers,—so infinitely much more could, would, and did God permit it, when sin involved all mankind in helpless ruin and misery, and when so adequate a substitute as his only-begotten Son was willing to satisfy all the demands of the law against us, and when no interest whatever suffered, but rather the interests of God's mercy, and the Son's mediatorial glory, and the salvation of all believers were thereby promoted.

Moreover, there are cases of this very substitution continually occurring, not only in human governments, but in God's providential government over us. For instance, a terribly mysterious plague, like cholera, once broke out in a town in Italy. So destructive was it, that it was spreading and striking down, in a moment, the

people everywhere. All was consternation. What was to be done? All the ordinary skill of the physicians was utterly unavailing? After a consultation among them, it was concluded that, in order to discover the nature of the disease and what would cure it, one of their number should dissect one of its victims. But who would or could do that, as the greatest skill was required, and as the handling of the corpse was through contagion certain to terminate in the operator's death? One, the most skilful of them all, volunteered—shut himself up in a room with one of the loathsome corpses—carefully dissected it, discovered the nature of the plague, and saw what would remove it—wrote all down in a scroll, which he medicated to prevent infection, and which, being thrown out to the other physicians, enabled them to destroy the terrible pest, and save the people. But what became of the volunteer operator? He died—died in all the horrors of the plague. He became a plague-offering for his fellow-townsmen, that they through him might be delivered from it, and live. Moreover, that plague was

one of the consequences of sin—God's judgment against sin, for sin is the cause of all evils. This man, then, in this matter, was a substitute for his fellow-townsmen, endured for them one of God's judgments against sin. And God owned and blessed his self-sacrifice, so as to cause, through his death, many to live. Thus, by this positive case in his providence, and hundreds of similar cases might easily be adduced, God distinctly teaches us, that to save and bless through the sacrifice of a proper substitute, even in judgment of sin, is a positive principle with him, and so most positively illustrates and establishes his own gospel, that his son "died for our sins," in order that we through him "might not perish, but have everlasting life."

The third difficulty we notice is contained in the question: How can the death of Christ for sin—he being only one person—be a perfect atonement for the sins of millions of persons? This, of course, is also made an objection by the opponents of the everlasting Gospel of God in Christ. But there are two things which shew that the Saviour's atonement is all-sufficient for

the salvation of the myriads that have believed, and do, and shall believe on his name. First, there is his position, as head of the covenant of grace. Thus, by way of illustration, we observe that a father, in providing for his family, is the substitute of them all. It is by his labour that they obtain the means of subsistence. A representative of a country, by the position in which the people have placed him, is the substitute of all the inhabitants of that country. His vote, for weal or for woe, is their vote, promoting their prosperity or ruining their interests. The official act of the Emperor of Russia, or of the President of the United States, on account of the position of each, is the act of many millions, plunging them in war and misery, or advancing them in freedom, education, and happiness. Then, especially, the sin of Adam, by the position in which God placed him as head, representative, or substitute of all his posterity in the covenant of works, was, as shewn in the first chapter, the sin of all the countless members of the human family. So, in the same way, by the position in which God has placed him as head, representative, or substitute

of all his people in the covenant of redeeming mercy, the perfectly meritorious obedience of Christ unto death is the perfect atonement of millions to the latest generations that appropriate it to themselves by believing on him as their Saviour. And so it is written—"As in Adam all [that are or remain in him] die, even so in Christ shall all [that are or believe in him] be made alive." Then, secondly, there is Christ's intrinsic value, as a holy, divine being. A gold coin, for instance, will purchase hundreds, if not thousands, of copper pieces. An ox, if such a thing should happen, would be a ransom for millions of insects. A human soul, because spiritual and immortal, is more precious than a whole world of beasts that perish. So, when we consider that Christ was not only perfectly holy, but a Divine being—"one with the Father" —it is evident that, in giving himself a ransom for sinners, his ransom was of infinite value, more precious than all sinners of mankind put together. Hence, even man's finite reason can in a great measure, understand the blessed truth of our heavenly Father's word, "If any

man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

The fourth difficulty is, how can the sufferings of Christ, which were only temporal, be the perfect means of redeeming the believing sinner from everlasting sufferings? This is, no doubt, a great difficulty to man's natural reason; for God, in this as in many other things, calls upon us to believe it as a fact upon the authority of his Word, and not upon the mere authority of our own understanding. The opponents of the Gospel try, of course, to increase the difficulty by assuming that, in order to redeem the sinner from everlasting punishment, the Saviour, as the substitute, must himself endure everlasting punishment. But this is a mere presumptive inference on their part, and presumptive inferences, even in common things, are often very wrong; and in this case, being opposed to God's Word, must be wrong. There are, besides, many almost self-obvious reasons which show that it

was neither proper nor necessary that the Saviour should, in the sinner's stead, suffer eternally. First, it was not necessary. In all likelihood the sinner naturally remains for ever in a state of punishment; simply because he can do nothing to redeem himself. If a man, for instance, contracts a debt, and is unable to pay it, he suffers in the eye of the law, and in his treatment by society, until it is paid for him by a substitute, and, failing that, he suffers all through life. But by the simple act of paying the debt, his substitute, if he obtains one, may in an hour or two set him free. Apply this to the sinner's case. He cannot himself ever meet and discharge the claims of the law against him, and therefore he naturally remains for ever under the curse of the law, or eternally punished. But the Saviour could and did, by his perfect obedience unto death, as his substitute, satisfy all the claims of the law against him; and, as in the other case the surety redeemed the defaulter in an hour or two, even so, in this case, it required only temporal suffering on the Saviour's part to redeem the sinner. Or again,

suppose that by a fall a man had his leg broken, and could not heal it himself, what would be the consequence? Why, his leg would, so to speak, remain broken for life if left to himself. But how long would it take a thoroughly qualified surgeon to set it right? Perhaps only an hour's exertion on his part would be required. Even so it required only temporal exertion on the Saviour's part to set the sinner right with God. Or, further, suppose a subject, having previously rebelled against and angered his sovereign, was banished for life; and suppose the sovereign's son, by acting as his mediator, obtained his pardon and restoration, how long would that mediation require? Only a humiliation on the Son's part for a short time. So, on the part of God's Son, it required only his humiliation unto death, during his thirty-three years' sojourn in this world, to obtain the believing sinner's pardon and recall from the sentence of "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." Thus these diversified cases, all occurring in common life, show and illustrate that the sinner,

just because he is helpless in himself, would suffer for ever if left to himself. They also show that, by his temporal sufferings as the surety of the believing sinner, the Saviour could, as he did, offer a perfect atonement for his sins, and deliver him from lying perpetually under the curse. And they likewise show that the assertion—that the Saviour, in order to save any sinner, must suffer in the very same manner, and for the same period that the sinner would suffer, if left to his own helplessness—is an unreasonable absurdity, especially seeing that, as in the debtor's case, a proper surety may offer equivalent for the debt in a very short time, and without suffering in the very same manner as the debtor would.

Again, take the parallel between Adam and Christ—the head of the covenant of works, and the head of the covenant of grace. Can any one imagine that, in order to gain the crown of eternal life, Adam was bound to remain in a state of trial or probation for ever? Nay; the very nature of his case shews that it required only a limited trial of perfect obedience on his

part in order to entitle him, and all posterity in him, as their representative, to be confirmed in life everlasting. And so, according to the parallel, it required only a limited period of perfect obedience unto death on the Saviour's part, in order to entitle him, not only to his own mediatorial crown, but also to the eternal redemption of his believing people. Again, as it was by the one sin of Adam—and not by his perpetually sinning—that many were made sinners, and became exposed to the curse; so it was only proper and necessary that, by the Saviour's one perfect sacrifice of himself for sin—and not by his perpetually suffering—all that accept of him by faith as their surety should be reckoned righteous, and heirs of the blessing.

Moreover, it would have been unjust to Christ to punish him eternally, in order to let the sinner go free. In human government, as in the case of a debtor's failure to pay money, the surety pays it all, and is so far a mere sufferer; because human governments do not, and perhaps cannot, administer full justice to all parties

concerned. But, as God is infinitely just, and is not limited by human frailties, is it to be supposed that he will have no regard to the just rights of an innocent, but suffering substitute? The very supposition is monstrous. As God, then, is just, he must, as he has done, have dealt justly with his Son, as our holy, yet suffering substitute. Had he left him perpetually under the curse, God would have been very unjust to him. True justice demanded that he, an innocent person, should not suffer for ever. True justice demanded that, as he suffered innocently and willingly in a good cause, he should be expressly rewarded. And this justice God has rendered to his only-begotten Son; for as the reward of his sufferings in dying for sinners of mankind, he has bestowed on him the mediatorial crown of the universe—having "put all things under his feet," and "made him head over all things to the Church."

And, in addition to the Saviour's holy and voluntary substitution for us, consider the divine in it. If the guilty are banished for ever, we

naturally feel that there is no merit in their sufferings, because it is their just desert. But if a man suffers as a martyr in a good cause, we instinctively feel, humanly speaking, that his sufferings are all meritorious, because he deserved otherwise. So the facts that Christ did not, in the least, deserve his sufferings—that he died, in unspeakably the best of all causes—and that he willingly gave himself for the salvation even of the vilest of the vile—shew that even his temporal sufferings were far more meritorious than the sufferings of all sinners being cut off from God's favour for ever. Then, as he was divine, as well as human, this gave, even to his temporal sufferings, an infinite value. For instance, if the supposition may be allowed, how long would it take mankind to make a world? They never could do it. But, by a word, God made it in a comparatively short space of time —yea, could have done it in a moment. On the same principle, it may be asked, how long would it take mankind to expiate sin, and fulfil all the demands of the law, so as to bring in an everlasting righteousness for sinners? Never could they

do it. But, as Christ was "God manifest in the flesh"—infinitely able to bear and to accomplish—so it required only temporal suffering on his part to expiate all the transgressions of our race. And when we behold him condescending to take on himself the likeness of sinful flesh, see him rejected, despised, and crucified of men, persecuted by the powers of hell, mark that "on him the Farther laid the iniquities of us all," hear him on the cross exclaiming "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," while the sun reddens as if weeping blood, and all nature, as if unable to look at the awful scene, covers her face with a dark mantle, and the earth quakes and rends at the throes of our world's redemption, surely even human reason can, in a measure, perceive that these deep mysterious sufferings of God's only-begotten Son, temporal as they were, were infinitely more than sufficient to expiate the guilt of all his believing people, and to bring in everlasting righteousness for them.

The last difficulty, in connection with this subject, we notice is the objection, that, if the

sinner were to be saved, not by his own works alone, nor partly by his own works and partly by Christ's, but freely and solely by the obedience of Christ unto the death for him, it would tend to make the believer licentious, or more wicked than he naturally is. But this objection is opposed both to reason, and Scripture, and fact. If a man risked his life to save another from drowning, what would be the effect upon the saved man's mind and life? His heart would be so touched with love and gratitude to his preserver—love and gratitude more powerful than any law or command—that, instead of despising and hating him, he would be constrained to do what he could to honour and please him. So, in regard to the believer's obtaining free redemption through the sacrifice of Christ for him, the effect, says Paul, is, "the love of Christ constraineth us, that we should live, not unto ourselves, but unto him that loved us, and gave himself for us." Moreover, faith in Christ is a transforming power. Looking unto him in faith, we are changed, by the very believing look, into the same moral image that

he is. Besides, through faith in Christ, and on account of his satisfaction for us, we obtain the spirit that gradually enlightens our minds, and purifies our hearts, and regulates our wills, and refines our lives, and works in us love both to God and man, and every other Christian grace. And, then, this objection is opposed to fact. Are the lives of those persons, who believe that they are saved, not by their own works, but freely and entirely by the grace of God in Christ Jesus,—are the lives of such persons licentious? On the contrary, all history testifies, that all such persons, the more they so believe, the purer, the nobler, the more sublime, loving, and useful has been their career. Look at Paul, at Brainerd, at Wilberforce, M'Cheyne, Jonathan Edwards, Dr. Chalmers, and thousands of others. But what need of words? Only tell even a slave-holder that his slave is a genuine believer in a free, full, and eternal salvation in Jesus, and that slave-holder will trust that slave with all he has. Only tell a merchant of extensive business, that such a servant is a sincere Christian, and that merchant has no fears about his

truth, honesty, or attentiveness. Yea, only take the members of any Christian church, even indiscriminately, the sincere and careless together, and, compared with a like number taken indiscriminately from the world, you will find that, not only in regard to spirituality unto God, but in truth, honesty, love, and usefulness in the world, the Christian members, inferior as they are to their Saviour-exemplar, are, as a whole, immeasurably the superior. Even so those nations of the earth that are the most Christian, are by far the most powerful, civilized, and beneficent. Everywhere, more and more, it is now admitted.

"A Christian is the highest style of man." A wicked man may not credit a wicked man, but he will trust a Christian. A hypocrite adores a Christian; and, therefore, he pretends to be one. While especially, in the sight of God, the judge of all the earth, it is only the Christian that enjoys his saving mercy and grace.

It thus appears, from many facts, principles, and truths of common life, that the perfect

atonement of Christ for us, taking it as described in God's word, is not opposed to man's finite reason—the very reverse. But it is our duty, as stated before, to believe in it, not on the authority of our own reason, but on the authority of God's revelation. If I believe it merely upon the authority of my own reason, then it is not God's authority, but my own reason that I honour. But if I believe it, because God reveals it to me in his word as his perfect remedy for my natural guilt and ruin, then it is God's authority I submit to and revere. And why should we not believe it implicitly, simply upon God's authority, even though many mysterious things about it are and ever must be beyond our finite grasp? It is the remedy which he, the all-truthful as well as the all-merciful one, has provided for us; and therefore we ought to have the most perfect confidence in it. The atonement of Christ, as the substitute of sinners, pleased him; and, therefore, it should please us. And as, in view of Christ's perfect satisfaction to his law for us, God proclaimed him "his well-beloved

Son," and has "exalted him far above all principalities and powers;" so, especially as Christ is all our salvation, we should cleave to him as all our desire, and crown him Mediatorial Lord of All.

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CHAPTER V.

THE RELATION OF THE ATONEMENT TO MAN.

"He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."—MARK xvi. 16.

THE death of God's incarnate only-begotten Son, as the propitiation for sin, is so marvellous and momentous an event, that, in all probability, it bears some relation to every moral, intelligent being in the universe. Certain it is, that it has a peculiarly close relation to God, for it enabled him to manifest his infinite justice and holiness against sin, and yet to be infinitely merciful to the sinner, to be a "just God, and yet the justifier of them that believe on Jesus." Certain it is, that it has also a very intimate relation to God's

Son himself, for it enabled him to display his great compassion for the misery of sinners, and has given him the glorious prospect that "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied," in countless myriads redeemed by his blood, "being with him and beholding his glory. It has likewise some close relation to the holy angels; for the sufferings and glory connected with it are "things which the angels desire to look into," and they are represented in Scripture as uniting with the redeemed in heaven in "praising God and the Lamb that was slain." But as our object in these pages is not so much theological as humanly practical, we proceed to notice the diversified relation which the Saviour's atoning death has to our fallen, guilty, dying race.

In many works upon the atonement, it is common to divide all mankind into the elect and non-elect, and to say that the atonement secures the salvation of the elect. This word "elect" is Scriptural, and therefore a proper one. Nevertheless, as the Calvinist as well as the Arminian admits that we know the elect only

by their faith, and as God in his Word ascribes such importance to faith as to make our eternal weal or woe depend upon it, we shall speak of the atonement in its relation to our race, as either believers or unbelievers.

In Christendom, as in all countries where the Gospel already is published and proclaimed, men must be classed as either believing or disbelieving it. There is no neutrality admitted here; for, says the Saviour, "he that is not for Me is against Me." If a man, therefore, that can obtain a knowledge of the Gospel remains ignorant of it, he is responsible for his ignorance, and blameable, and to be regarded as an unbeliever. Hence, in all Gospel countries, the people, generally speaking, are either believers or unbelievers.

What, then, is the relation which the atonement bears to these believers? It secures their future salvation. Thus, in our text, it is said, "he that believeth shall be saved;" or, as elsewhere stated, "whosoever believeth on God's only-begotten Son, as God's atonement for our sins, shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Now, as this grand result is secured by faith, it follows that all other blessings necessary to it, as pardon, acceptance, purification, and triumph over sin, death, and hell, will be also bestowed on the believer. And all this is the gift, the free, unmerited gift of God, offered to sinners of mankind, for although "the wages of sin is death," yet "the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus." And what connection has our faith with this gift? Faith in it is not only our honouring God, but it is the acceptance of the gift, and therefore every true believer shall, through the grace of God in Christ, be fully and finally saved in the great hereafter. But the atonement also secures the present comfort of the believer. By showing him that he will be thus saved, it removes his fears of sin, death, and judgment, gives him peace, joy, and hope in believing, and enables him, "while looking at the things which are unseen but eternal," to "rejoice in hope of that eternal life with glory which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." It likewise secures the believer's true repentance and holy

living unto God; for his faith, as shown before, unites him to Christ, makes him love God and feel a pleasure in observing his commands and ordinances. If, therefore, any one asks, "Shall I be saved?" the answer is, "Yes; if thou believest sincerely and truly; for the warrant is, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And if such an one further asks, "But how am I to know that I am a true believer?" the reply is, "If you have not only peace, joy, and hope in believing, but also love God, by keeping his precepts and ordinances, for his mercy and grace to you in Jesus, you have the witness in yourself, God's Spirit through his Word bearing witness with your own spirit, that you have a true faith and good hope through grace." If you have no such faith, hope, and obedience, depend upon it that you have never yet come to Christ, never have yet truly looked unto him as your Saviour. It may be, however, that your faith is weak, and therefore you neither see, nor do, nor feel much spiritually. In such a case, in order that your faith may be lively and strong, keep looking

unto Jesus, holding fast your profession without wavering, and then, as God is true, when you are done with all here below, your lot will be with those of whom the voice from heaven says, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

There is, next, the relation of the atonement to unbelievers on earth. It secures, in the meantime, God's forbearance to them, to see whether they will repent and believe to the saving of their souls. Nevertheless, so long as they remain in unbelief, it has also a condemning relation unto them. Thus the second clause of our text adds, "but he that believeth not shall be damned." The word "damned" is to human ears a harsh, strong word; but then, as it is a correct translation of the original, it is not man's word, but God's; and therefore no man may dare, but at his own peril, tamper with it. And what does this damnation imply? It implies that the unbeliever obtains no pardon, no acceptance, no purification, but is left

under the power of his natural guilt, pollution, and misery, to dwell for ever with those of like unholy, wretched character. Moreover, the sinner's unbelief in the atonement implies criminality and foolishness on his part. It implies that he is foolish, as it is by his own folly in rejecting God's mercy in Jesus that he not only exposes himself to eternal misery, but robs himself of much present peace, hope, and happiness. Thus the Saviour says, "he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." So, then, it is BECAUSE he will not believe, will not accept of God's saving mercy in Jesus through faith in it, that the unbeliever remains already in a state of condemnation, and at last perishes. It is no other but himself, by his own foolish unbelief, that destroys his own soul. And it cannot be otherwise. If a man has one of the arteries in his limbs cut, he naturally bleeds to death; and if he refuses the aid of a qualified surgeon, he is not only sure to die, but his death lies at his own door. So the sinner, that refuses by unbe-

lief God's grace and mercy in Jesus, has no one to blame for his perdition but himself. Moreover, this unbelief in God's remedy in Christ for our sins and miseries is a criminal act, a criminal insult to the Almighty. Thus, the Scriptures say, "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." Besides, the case is not materially altered, even though there be no positive, wilful, rejection of the Gospel. The unbeliever perishes if he only neglects it. "How," exclaims the Apostle, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" If a merchant neglect his business, he will soon become a hopeless bankrupt. If a farmer neglect to plough and sow his land in spring, he will have no harvest in autumn, but only noisome weeds and thistles. So if the sinner now neglect God's free offer of salvation in Jesus, he dies and perishes in his sins. And to those especially that not only neglect, but despise and ridicule the atonement of God's only-begotten Son, this perdition is bitter. Thus it is said, "he that despised Moses' law died

without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the spirit of grace." Therefore, let unbelievers of all grades, and especially perverters and mockers of God's Gospel, take heed unto themselves; for God is and cannot be mocked. If he is now long-suffering and merciful, not willing that any should perish in sin, but all should come through faith in Jesus unto him and live, yet if his remedy in Jesus is rejected, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin," but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. "Therefore," O reader, if you be an unbeliever or neglecter of God's Gospel, "I beseech you, by the mercies of the living God," that you accept of his grace in Jesus; for if "he that believeth shall be saved," yet "he that believeth not shall be damned."

There is, further, the relation of the atonement to the heathen. By these, I mean the

inhabitants of those countries to whom the light of the Gospel has not yet come. And, being without that light, what a deplorable state they almost universally are in—physically, morally, and spiritually! To the traveller, missionary, and historian, however, I must leave the picture of the miserably low condition of the social, moral, and intellectual condition of the heathen, a condition chiefly, if not entirely, springing from and associated with their spiritual darkness and debasing idolatry. The chief thing we have here to do with, then, is their low, false, religious condition. They have, almost universally, no notion of the only true God, or of access unto him by the blood of Jesus; and, accordingly, we find them robbing God of the glory due unto his name by giving his worship even to blocks of wood and stone, discover them seeking pardon not only by false ways, but even by human tortures and cruelties, and see them often, in regard to their sins and the death of beloved friends, as in the case of Cicero, in losing his only daughter, distracted, sorrowing as having no light, and therefore no hope. Thus

their condition shows that, without the knowledge of Christ's atonement, they do indeed "dwell in the region and valley of the shadow of death." When we look at their degraded state, we may well, even in regard to this life, not to speak of eternity, bless God that we are born in a Christian country. It has sometimes been asked, "As the heathen have, and can have, no knowledge or faith in God's mercy in Christ, is it possible for any of them to be saved?" No man on earth can authoritatively answer that question, as God, that alone knows it positively, has given us no satisfactory information about it. Our own private opinion is, that a few of them, at least, will be saved. When we consider that they, at any rate, never rejected the salvation that is in Jesus—when we reflect that many of them, as Socrates, Plato, and others, honestly and earnestly sought after moral and spiritual truth, attained to a comparatively high degree of it, and walked consistently up to the light, so far as they knew it—and when we think that they, in all probability, would have embraced the Gospel if it

had been within their reach—our own opinion is that so many of them, in the great day, will be found to have obtained mercy. Yet, if any of them be saved, it will be, we feel assured, only through the atonement of Christ for them; for it is only in Christ that God is just and holy against sin, and yet merciful to the sinner. How this may be, as they could have no knowledge, or faith in Christ, we cannot tell; but still it is the only way of salvation, and therefore must be, if at all. Nevertheless, this is chiefly our private opinion only; and perhaps, in regard to the future state of the heathen, it becomes no man to judge at all, but to leave the matter entirely with God, saying, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The first positive relation which the atonement has to the heathen, so far as we have any certain knowledge, is that its glad tidings is to be sent to them. The great commission which the Saviour gave to his disciples, and which is still binding upon every Christian mediately or immediately, is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to do all things whatever I have commanded you." And "he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." This command, we repeat, is binding on every Christian, for upon all those who are saved by his grace, the Saviour calls to help as instruments in saving others. If God said, "My people perish for lack of knowledge," then for want of the Gospel the heathen must be much more in a perishing state; and therefore it so much the more becomes the Christian Church to be alive in carrying the light of eternal life to those that are dwelling in the regions of darkness and death. A second relation of the atonement to the heathen is that it shall, in God's appointed time, be made known to them all, and produce corresponding good fruits; for it is written that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," and that "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." And, further, in regard to

"the great multitude, which no man can number," that stand before the throne of God, perfected and triumphant, crying "Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb," the apostle John, in his beatific vision, saw that that multitude is or shall be composed out "of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues."

There is, still further, the relation of the atonement to those of our race that are already, or shall yet be, in eternity. It has a relation to the lost. Thus it is said, "But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Here, in this black catalogue, the unbelieving are classed with the vilest of mankind, showing that unbelief in the atonement, which the love of God has in Christ provided for our sins, is indeed a most deadly sin. Nay, it would appear as if the atonement of Christ will be a means of increasing the terrors of the lost, especially in the

day of judgment. Thus they are represented in Scripture as "saying to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

And, lastly, there is its relation unto the redeemed in heaven. It secures their appearance nigh to the very fountain of all glory and blessedness, their purification from all the remains of indwelling sin, and their complete triumph over death, hell, and every other enemy. Hence they are pictured out as "standing before the throne, clothed in white robes, and having palms in their hands." It also secures their entire deliverance from all the manifold miseries of this earthly life. So it is written, "God shall wipe away all their tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." It likewise secures their enjoyment of all the blessedness there is to be found in the presence

of the Infinite Giver of all good. Thus it is stated, "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters." It further secures for them the fellowship of the very best society, their home above, in their Father's house being the abode of his more glorious presence, and of Jesus, as their elder brother, and of all the holy angels, and of the best, noblest, and most elevated that ever trod this lower world. Moreover, it secures their everlasting residence there; for heaven is not the earthly Paradise, the possession of which depended upon the earthly Adam's obedience, but it is the everlasting dwelling-place of the eternal Father, and their possession of it is secured by the Saviour's ever living, as their perfect unchangeable High Priest, to make continual intercession for them. Hence it is said, "the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus;" and "the inheritance" of the redeemed

is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away;" and "they shall go no more out," but "reign for ever and ever." And the atonement, as securing all these unsearchable riches of God's grace, elicits from the redeemed above all the glowing praise that springs from the fervent love and gratitude of their ravished hearts, and hence their grateful, glorious anthem, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."

It thus appears, from this opposite relation of the atonement to believers and unbelievers, that God has established a radical, essential, and eternal distinction between belief and unbelief in it. In these last days, as of old before the flood, and even in the garden of Eden, there is a tendency, not only in men's natural hearts, but even in the mouths of some, to try, if possible, to obliterate this distinction in men's minds, saying, in opposition to common sense, and God's justice, holiness, and revelation, that

as God is love, so all, no matter how wicked or unbelieving they live, shall at last be saved. The first advocate of this damnable heresy, as Jude would call it, since its natural tendency is to encourage in ungodliness and disobedience, was Satan, and his first converts, or perverts, were Eve and Adam. "Surely," said the tempter to them, "surely" if ye disbelieve and disobey God in taking of this fruit, apparently so pleasant, though forbidden, "surely ye shall not die." So spake the father of lies, and his word, in preference to God's, our first parents believed, and soon found, by bitter experience, that they had believed a damnable lie. So, like the father of lies, the same heresy now is too current; in order, if possible, to deceive the very elect. But let us take good heed unto ourselves. It is with God, the judge of all the earth, and not with man or Satan, we have supremely to do. Let us ever remember, as his whole Word shows, that belief and unbelief in his mercy in Christ are radically, essentially distinct from each other; and, therefore, never can lead to the same saving result. Thus, in

regard to the atonement, to believe it is to honour God as infinitely true; but to disbelieve it is to insult God by neglecting or rejecting his best gift, and to perish in our sins. And hence, on account of this ineradicable external distinction, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his great commission, says, "he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

But, blessed be God, we are not only still in the land of hope and repentance, but a voice from heaven, full of tenderness and saving mercy, is yet giving us a most blessed invitation.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GRACIOUS INVITATION.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy leaden, and I will give you rest. Take up my yoke, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."—Matt. xi. 28-30.

SO tenderly speaks the friend of sinners, the loving and only all-sufficient Saviour, friend of tried, sinful, suffering humanity, all-sufficient to supply all our needs here, and to bless us in eternity far beyond all we can ask or think. Yes; he who was in the bosom of the heavenly Father from all eternity, as one brought up with him, who, pitying our fallen, sinful, suffering, helpless estate, condescended to leave that bosom, come into our

world, and unite the likeness of our sinful flesh to his own divine essence, who mingled so freely and affectionately with our race, during his thirty-three years' sojourn here, in healing, comforting, restoring, and instructing, and at last, on the cross, gave himself up to the death as the perfect sacrifice for our sins—who was not only delivered for our offences, but raised up again for our justification—who has a fellow-feeling with us in all our infirmities, having been tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin—who ever liveth at God's right hand, as our mediator with him, continually making all-prevailing intercession for us, and is therefore able to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God through him—he, as "he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," so now from the throne of grace in heaven he gives the same gracious invitation that he gave on earth, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

There are two principal reasons that lead the Saviour to give you this blessed invitation.

The first is, that all obstacles to your obtaining God's pardon, help, and everlasting favour, are now entirely removed. The atonement which the Saviour offered for your sins was a perfect one—the way, therefore, to peace with God, and all his other blessings, is now freely open to every sinner—and, therefore, the Saviour now invites you to come unto him, in order to get quit of your weary, heavy burdens, and find rest to your souls. Then, he knows that you will never find true, abiding rest till you come unto him. As there is only one sun in the sky to give light to all the world, as there was only one ark in the fearful time of the deluge, and only those in it were preserved from that destruction, so there is only one Saviour in whom God has deposited all the riches of his mercy, and grace to help in time of need; and therefore it is only by coming unto him that we can get rid of our grievous burdens, and find rest—sweet, true, abiding rest—to our souls.

As we are dependent creatures, we must have something to rest upon, even though that something be false or inefficient. And, alas! there

are many such false or inefficient things that sinners are trusting to as all their rest and happiness. Thus, in order to find happiness and rest, some are eagerly immersing themselves in business, or piling up gold and property; and others are frequenting scenes of gaiety and pleasure. For a while, intoxicated by these things, the brain and heart often fancy that they have found blessedness, and, so long as the intoxication continues, it is a real blessedness, though not a high one. But after a little while these pall, even before they totally perish. They satisfy neither mind, heart, nor conscience, and the soul starves in the midst of them. As Alexander wept after conquering the world, finding it only left him miserable still—as Solomon, after drinking of all earthly luxury, munificence, and sensuality, exclaimed, in bitterness and emptiness of soul, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit"—so thousands upon thousands, whose coffers are filled with gold, or who are engaged in scenes of fashion and revelry, are miserable, disappointed, ill at ease, having no true happiness or rest in it at all. Moreover,

the very thought that all earthly rests and pleasures soon perish throv s a black cloud over them all, even while enjoying them. Disappointments after disappointments soon destroy all relish for them. Sickness shews them to be an empty bubble. Death proves them to be not only delusive, but without any abiding foundation. Judgment makes us feel that divine love, pardon, holiness, and salvation, are the only fixed realities in existence for us. And eternity shews us that if we have not obtained these by coming unto the Saviour now, there is no more rest for us, and happiness is clean gone for ever.

So the Saviour knowing all this perfectly, and feeling intensely for the woes of humanity, here invites all those labouring and heavy-laden to come unto him as their only true rest—a rest to their souls that shall never fail them, either in present trouble, sickness, death, or future judgment. And how many on earth are labouring and heavy-laden—laden with poverty, with bereavement, with disappointment, with reproach, with sickness, old age, and doubts and

fears of sin, death, and eternity! There is perhaps not a single home on earth, that there is one, at least, groaning under some heavy burden, and, if not come to Jesus, tossed about in soul as a restless wave of the sea. Yea, it is certain that there is not one of us, as we are all sinful, dying, responsible creatures, no matter what we be now, but will feel some of these burdens soon; and at last as we draw nigh to death and judgment, will also feel that unpardoned sin, a polluted soul, and a holy just God against sin, are burdens upon the conscience, that will, if not now removed by Jesus, sink the soul into perdition. Nevertheless, it is only the labouring and heavy-laden—those that feel their sins and sorrows—that the Saviour here invites to come unto him. Does he, then, not wish any others? Yes, he wants all. All need him. None can be happy or find rest without him. And not only is he willing, but able to remove all burdens, and to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God through him. Moreover, he complains that "they will not come unto him, and live." Yea, as he wept over

Jerusalem, because it slumbered in impenitence while the thunderbolts of divine vengeance were massing over it, so he still grieves that sinners should remain rebels to God, slight the spirit of grace and the blood of redemption, and sport or slumber on the terrible volcano of the second death—a volcano that may in a moment erupt and engulph for ever the unreconciled soul. Hence, there is the general invitation, "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Nevertheless, as you yourselves would most readily address those whom you believed most willing to listen unto you; so the Saviour here specially invites those "that labour and are heavy-laden"—those that feel their sins and sorrows, and the unstable and unsatisfactory nature of all earthly things—as they are the most likely to hearken and come unto him to find rest to their souls.

All ye, then, that labour and are heavy-laden, come unto Jesus—for he specially invites you—and he will give you rest, and ye shall find rest to your souls. What is your burden? Does the thought of your sins trouble your con-

science, and lie upon it as a heavy burden? Then come to Jesus, and cast all the burden upon him; for "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin." Are you afraid that, after all your provocations, God will retain his anger against you, and never again be at peace with you? Then come to Jesus; for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Does the solemn declaration—"he that believeth not shall be damned"—fill your soul with secret terror? Then come unto Jesus; for "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Are you anxious lest you may be too impure to enter heaven? Then come to Jesus; for "by the once offering of himself, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," or dedicated unto him. Do fears of death and judgment haunt and distress your mind? Then come to Jesus; and he will give you light and hope in the dark valley, and "boldness in the judgment." Do you tremble lest some enemy may at last destroy your soul, and cause you to come short of eternal life? Then come to Jesus; for

"he giveth unto his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands. His Father, who gave them to him, is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of his Father's hands." Or fear you that, even if you were in heaven, you will be as a mere stranger there—none to know, receive, or welcome you? Then come to Jesus; for "where he is, there you shall be also," as your friend, your elder brother, your all and in all. In short, for entire deliverance from sin, death, and hell, and for the possession of "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," come to Jesus; for "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and he will "be made of God unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

And so, in regard to troubles and dangers connected with this life. Are you enjoying worldly prosperity, but like a wise person somewhat fearful lest that prosperity may turn out a curse rather than a blessing to you? Then come to Jesus; and he will keep away the curse, and make your earthly advancement a

blessing to yourself and others. Are you struggling with pinching poverty, as if its distracting burdens would never come to an end? Then come to Jesus; and he will give you "the true riches—riches that will never take wings and fly away, and that no moth or rust will corrupt, and no thief break into and steal." Are you suffering under cruel desertion or unmerited reproach, that, like a sting, is inflaming your soul? Then come to Jesus; for, having endured bitter reproach and desertion unjustly himself, he can and will fully sympathise with you. Are you confined to the chamber or bed of sickness, lonely and suffering? Then come to Jesus, and lay your weary head on his bosom; for he knows what heavy suffering is, and will feel for you, and make your bed in your sickness. Is your heart bleeding, mourning over the death of some beloved friend—yea, sorrowing over the loss of friend upon friend? Then come to Jesus; and in him you will find a friend worthy of all your love, trust, and admiration—a friend that neither life, nor death, nor anything else, will ever separate you from—a friend that

will never leave nor forget you, but be always with you, in every trial here, and at death will take you home to himself, where also you will see and meet again all your best friends, never more to part. Are you, as day after day is hastening you on to eternity, in any doubt, or fear, or darkness, as to whither you are going? Then come to Jesus; for "he is the light of the world, and every one that followeth him shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Or, in regard to all the duties, perplexities, temptations, and difficulties of life, are you afraid your own strength and wisdom shall fail? Then come to Jesus; and he will give you "grace to help in time of need;" yea, "make your own weakness perfect in his strength." In short, in all things come to Jesus; and he will give rest to your soul here, and at last give you an abundant entrance into that "rest that remaineth for the people of God."

Yes, if you come to Jesus, he will give you rest, and you shall find rest to your souls. Everything proves it. The love of God in Christ, and the power, the compassion, the

atonement, and office of Christ, as the one mediator between God and man, shew that it must be so. It springs from the very nature of your own constitution, or the laws of your own consciousness. Thus, as the man whose property is insured, feels at rest about it, even though it may be burning—as the wounded man when he comes to a thoroughly qualified surgeon in whom he has confidence, immediately feels relieved in mind—as the passenger who has confidence in the captain and vessel, feels no anxiety, even though a storm may be raging—as the prodigal, strange, miserable, and perishing in a foreign land, felt that if in his Father's house where there was bread enough and to spare, his burden of shame and starvation would be removed, even so can no one come to Christ, as the divinely-appointed and all-sufficient Saviour of sinners, without having the burden of his anxiety about sin, death, providence, judgment, and eternity removed, and finding rest to his soul. Moreover, the experience of all Christians in a greater or less degree, according to their faith and holiness, fully demonstrates it.

The Philippian jailor, naturally a stern, stout Roman, but conscience-stricken and trembling with terror at the thoughts and natural consequences of sin, no sooner believed on the Lord Jesus Christ than he is found changed and rejoicing with all his house. So was it with Paul, Peter, John, and all the other converts and saints, mentioned in God's word. The united testimony of their experience is, "we who have believed do enter into rest;" "we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Atonement;" "whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" and "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, even to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time, wherein ye greatly

rejoice." And so, in all times, ten thousands upon thousands of heavy-laden sinners, rich and poor, young and old, bond and free, male and female, learned and unlearned, have all, on coming to Jesus, found in mind, heart, soul, and conscience, a rest, a peace, a joy, and a hope that the world cannot give, knows not, and cannot take away—"a good hope through grace" that made thousands of martyrs rejoice, even at the stake, that they were counted worthy to suffer for their Lord and Saviour. Moreover, as the unbeliever has no sure, eternal foundation to rest upon, so the longer he lives, the more does his own strength and means of happiness fail him, and therefore he becomes the more and more hopeless and miserable. Hence, even after running the round of all earthly pleasure, the sceptical have generally, like Lord Byron and the Earl of Chesterfield, bitterly condemned it all as but mere hollowness, and mourned over their life as blighted and wasted. But not even one Christian ever made such a sad confession about his life. On the contrary, the longer he lives, his Christian peace, joy. and hope go on

increasing. Even in his days of frailty, therefore, his cheerful testimony is, "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and portion for ever." If he has any regret, it only is that he did not come to Jesus sooner, and serve him more lovingly and zealously. So it is on earth, as every one may verify for himself; and in eternity, as God's Word reveals, all the blessedness is only with those that have gone to Jesus. Thus, all the evidence proves that they who now come to Jesus have the best rest and happiness here; and that they alone, in the great hereafter, enter upon that rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Desirous of this rest, do you ask, then, how, or where you can come to Jesus? Come by believing on him as your personal Saviour. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Believing on him is just coming unto him; for, in the very act of believing, the trust, the hopes, the affections of the soul go out to him, and rest upon him, as their sure foundation. Come unto him in prayer. He is your high priest with God, even being himself

the throne of grace; and therefore, says the apostle, "let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Come unto him in his Church, for He says, "where two or three are met together in My Name, there am I in in the midst of them"—as the dew on the mown grass to revive it, as the sunbeam in the garden to beautify it, as the father in the midst of his family to bless and delight in them. Come unto him, by reading his Word, and making his believing people your chief associates; for where these are, depend upon it, he is not far distant. By thus believing and acting, your whole life will be a coming unto Jesus, until at death you find yourself in his immediate, glorious presence.

Or, do you ask when you may, or should come? Come now. The sooner, the safer and better. The lost in eternity, if they were in your place, would in all probability at once flee unto him as their refuge from the storm. But they sinned away their day of grace; for as death finds a person, judgment overtakes him.

"Behold, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the day of provocation." "Let us also fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." There is no benefit in carrying your heavy burden, or remaining in an unpardoned, dangerous state, a moment longer. You cannot be at peace with God, in rest of conscience, safe, and blessed, too soon. Therefore, come now.

Or, finally, do you ask what preparation you require in order now to come to Jesus? You need none. You need to be prepared for death, for judgment, for eternity; and therefore the greatest duty for the greatest event in your lives is inculcated upon you in the solemn command, "Prepare to meet thy God!" But, in order to be prepared for all these, you are to come to Jesus now, unprepared, just as you are; for you can have no proper preparation for them but what he gives you. It is all deposited with him, in him, or through him; for "he of God is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and

sanctification, and redemption;" and therefore unprepared you are to come to him in order to receive all from him. As the client comes with his case just as it is, to the advocate, leaving him to arrange and plead it; so come with your case to Jesus, as your advocate with the Father, leaving him to arrange and plead it; for "the Father heareth him always," and he gains every case he pleads. As the wounded man, bleeding, and pained, and dusty, is carried immediately to the surgeon, just as he is, so come, bleeding in heart, or smarting in conscience, or trembling with fear, to Jesus, that he may bind up your broken heart, give peace to your conscience, or turn your fears into confidence and joy. As the child, hungry, ragged, dirty, and thirsting for sympathy, comes just as it is, looking for bread, clothing, cleansing and love from its parent, so come to Jesus, that he may give you the bread of eternal life, clothe you with the robe of his righteousness, purify you with the Spirit of grace, and satisfy you with the fulness of his love. Or as the clay, a filthy, shapeless lump, is brought to the potter that he

may mould it into some beautiful form, so "shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin," as all naturally are, come unto Jesus, that he by his almighty power and grace may transform you into his own glorious, perfect, moral image, and make you "meet for the inheritance of the saints in life." As is said pithily by Harts—

Venture on him, venture fully,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.

Or to the Saviour's gracious invitation—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heaven-laden"—let your response to him be the touching, beautiful, graphic lines of M'Cheyne—

Just as I am—without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to Thee—
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am—and Thou hast seen
How vile and wicked I have been;
To Thee, for Thou can'st make me clean—
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am—though toss'd about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
With fears within and foes without—
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind;
In Thee, the riches of the mind—
Light, health, and gladness, all to find—
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am—Thou wilt receive,
And wilt me pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe—
O Lamb of God, I come!

Just as I am—thy love divine
Has won this rebel heart of mine;
Now, to be thine, for ever thine—
O Lamb of God, I come!

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